

A Walk Through Bridge Street.

A History by Elizabeth Howard.

A walk through Bridge Street. Soon after 9 am on Thursday , 10th June 1841 , 33 year old solicitor Edward Hett, left his elegant double fronted house in Bridge St , and made his way across Market Place to the High St. It was raining and he was anxious to get to the Union Workhouse before the gentlemen of the Board of Guardians arrived and without his file of papers being soaked . The weekly meeting was scheduled to start at 10 in the forenoon. The first planning and building meetings had taken place in the upper room of the Castle Inn, but since its opening , the Guardians had met in the grand fireplaced, half panelled Board Room over the front entrance of the Workhouse .

Edward had lived in Downham for a number of years ; he had been appointed solicitor and clerk to the Board of Guardians of the newly opened Union Workhouse . He was the minute taker of the meetings and general clerk attending to the business of the workhouse , his neat sloping handwriting filling page after page of the thick Minute book . He had married well . His wife was Julia daughter of the Rev Charles Mann of Southery , and on this June morning she was expecting their second child. Edward`s salary of £100 per year allowed the family to employ four live in servants .

Edward had been articled to Wm Nanson, solicitor of Carlisle by his mother Elizabeth Hett of Bawtry in 1826 , and in 1835 he in turn was asked by Fidelia Blackburn of Wisbech to take on her son Edward as an articled clerk for five years.

Edward Hett`s subsequent career after he left Downham sometime after 1841 was unexpectedly varied and unusual . By 1851 Edward and Julia were living with Charles Furtado , singing master, in Camberwell . But before Camberwell , in April 1850 , he advertised his "residence in Bridge St ...on a two acre site....to let....with 6 best bedrooms , a water closet, stabling for 4 horses, granary , brewhouse and a walled garden " In 1861 he and Julia were in Newcastle under Lyme , and he was an earthenware manufacturer, master, employing 56 men, 41 boys, 52 women and 7 girls. Ten years later they are back in Camberwell and after Julia`s death Edward decided to become a Feather merchant aged 72 . His will of 1892 showed that he left a net estate of £12 .

Edward Hett`s next door neighbour , to the left, was John Powell , the 40 year old owner/occupier of the historic Crown Inn . John died very young aged 43 in 1849 and " a large number of townsfolk attended the funeral " It was a sizeable inn, including stabling for 40 horses, piggeries, cowsheds and a walled bowling green . This last may still exist at the back of the Conservative Club . At 9 am on Thursday morning the Union coach from King`s Lynn would have left some half hour earlier from the Swan on its way to London , and the Market Place would no doubt have still been busy John and Sarah Powell and their four working age children would be about the daily chores of the inn . The Inn then as now was a long inconvenient building and needed many hands to keep it ready for its customers and the Royal Mail coach from London would be in to Downham at half past 6 that evening .

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To the right of the Hetts , another big family rented a substantial house , called Eagle House, further down Bridge St away from Market Place , and these were the Pattersons. Both born in Ireland , James was a 37 year old surgeon and married with four children . Also in his household was his assistant surgeon , 20 year old Thomas Hall . Despite being born in Ireland , all James` medical qualifications were from Edinburgh and he continued to live in Bridge St into the 1850s. It may have been that James Patterson had hoped to be appointed medical officer to the Union workhouse but that post had been taken by the local doctor Thomas Wales . It is also possible that Edward Hett`s brother Alexander another surgeon , had hoped to be appointed to the Union workhouse , but maybe the Board of Guardians had felt uncomfortable with Alexander`s American medical degree and his French wife .

But the Pattersons too were on the move and by 1854 James had sold his horses and carriages and his furniture because he was emigrating to Australia .

The Patterson`s landlord John Houchen was a gentleman farmer and landowner of Wereham , though this one property in Bridge St seemed to be his only investment in Downham , he owned other property in the villages around .

Tucked in behind the Pattersons was Charles Bunkall , a 30 year old tailor , his wife Mary and their new baby William , all born in Downham.

Charles William and Mary Ann (Carter) were married in Downham in 1840 and Eli William was born in the early days of 1841 Charles William born 1806 was one of several children of Barker Bunkall and Sarah his wife. Barker and another son Henry were tailors and drapers in High St and Lynn Road . Also in this small group of buildings was William Steggals , born 1809 in Northwold . He was a saddler and later a collar and harness maker . He married Elizabeth Crisp in 1835 at St Edmunds, and by 1841 they had two young daughters and a son.. Another neighbour was John Long, a 40 year old police officer, one of the first in Downham , his wife Elizabeth and their daughter Matilda who earned her living by dressmaking , and possibly Matilda`s daughter Matilda Worby aged 4 .

The next house and buildings in Bridge St were owned by the 72 yr old Rev Henry Say , who lived at Swaffham , a widower and recently bereaved of his son the Rev Thomas Henry at only 29 years old . The Rev Henry was an educated man having attended Trinity College, Oxford in the 1780s . He was the son of William Say and Elizabeth Bell of Wallington , and the brother of Col. William Say . The premises were tenanted by William Bennett ., and consisted of a house plus four tenements and gardens . William was a bricklayer and had married the young Mary Lee of Stow Bardolph in 1829 , she was described as a minor and had been baptised in 1812 the daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Lee . In just twelve years of marriage , William and Mary have four sons and a daughter .

Of the house and buildings and four tenements , apart from Wm Bennett, there lived Matthew and Margaret Horsley , an 80 year old brother and 78 yr old sister both born in South Lynn , but in their long retirement living in Bridge St . Matthew Coats Horsley married Isabel Phelps

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in Canterbury in 1809 , and their daughters Jane and Isabel were born in 1814 and 1816 and baptised at South Lynn . In Pigots Directory of 1839 Matthew Coats Horsley was listed amongst the gentry . .However the London Gazette reported that in 1804 due to the bankruptcy of George Gowan , Thomas Gowan and Matthew Coats Horsley were the principal creditors and were described as merchants of Calcutta . Matthew and Margaret`s father another Matthew Horsley had been a farmer and grazier in King` Lynn and had left a considerable estate . Possibly as a result of the turmoil of the riots of 1816 , Matthew sold up his farming stock and implements at Marsh House, South Lynn in 1817 . He would have been in his late 50s . In 1820 he dissolved the partnership he had with Edward Mugridge , they were "Chymists" . As late as the beginning of the 20th C , Jane, Matthew and Isabel`s older daughter died at a great age, as her father had done, and left £12,000. She and her father spanned three centuries, he was born in 1760 and she died in 1903 . Jane was commemorated in the churchyard at Downham .

So it is perhaps odd that the Horsleys were renting property in Downham rather than owning their house . Next to the Horsleys was John Clarke, a 42 year old baker , with his wife Sarah and their three children , John , William and Eliza . Another old lady , 81 year old Elizabeth Shinn, lived next door to the Clarkes with her unmarried 38 year old daughter Sarah who was a dressmaker .

Then in the next substantial house and garden , as owner occupier lived George Mumford . By June 1841 he was a man of consequence and had lifted himself above the trade of tanner to the status of wool and seed merchant .. He married Sarah Garnham at St Edmunds in 1824. For the baptisms in St Edmunds of all his children in the 1820s he was a tanner but by the publication of the 1839 Pigots Trade Directory he was a man of many parts . He was agent for the East of England bank , a maltster and a surveyor . He also became trustee with Robert Winearls of Marham , to the estate of John Bush, farmer of Stow Bardolph . The estate was put in trust in order to pay the creditors of John Bush ; this was 1841 and George Mumford was described as a farmer . Of his four children , both Sarah Louisa and Fanny Maria married , but sadly his son George Richard died in 1845 at just 20 years old . George Mumford was the brother of Charles Mumford who was also a surveyor and perhaps the railway coming to Downham in the mid 1840s had brought the brothers here. George lived next door to William Chapman`s property tenanted by the James family . This William Chapman may be the same as the 60 year old William who was living with his wife Sarah in Church Lane . He was described as a farmer ; and he may have been born 1781 the son of the William Chapman in the 1791 tax assessment who was the owner of a tan yard A tan yard close by the Market Place where cattle were regularly for sale , and where several butchers plied their trade, would seem likely and it may well have existed behind Bridge St , in Chapman`s Yard . In the 1841 census this seems to be an alleyway between Alexander James family house and the premises of Wright Daines, basket maker .

Tanneries were noted for their appalling smell and mess and were usually sited away from residential property for this reason . However as Downham grew and spread it may be that by

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1841 the tannery became surrounded by dwellings and people . Maybe Alexander James who lived next to the Mumfords was able to bear the tannery . Alexander was born in Woolwich in 1792 probably the son of an Army family . He married Mary Bowles in Great Yarmouth in 1814 Their first two children Alexander and Mary Ann were born in Great Yarmouth which must have been Alexander`s first posting as an excise officer . Later children, and ten are still living at home in 1841 , were born in Holt , Wymondham and Downham . Sometime between 1841 and 1851 Alexander retired to London .

Between the James family , tenants of William Chapman , and the home of Wright Daines, was Chapman`s Yard down which some 40 people lived , so it must have had a considerable number of tenements and buildings . Perhaps they had been developed out of the disused tannery which might have moved further out of town .

Wright Daines lived in the first of six dwellings beyond Chapman`s yard. However on the Tithe map apportionment there are only two houses between Alexander James and the White Hart , yet the census shows six separate households which may not be the same as six separate houses . Wright Daines was born in 1806 in Carbrooke the son of Sarah Daines . No father`s name was given which perhaps suggests that Wright was illegitimate . With the family in the 1841 census is 60 year old Sarah Thompson . She may have no relationship to either of them , as a Sarah Daines married in St Edmunds in 1810 to John Heffer , a widower. Wright married Harriot Haylett in Great Dunham in 1826 and their four surviving children were with them in Bridge St .. Wright was a basket maker .

Next to the Daines was Francis Mace , his wife and four grown up children . Francis was a 44 year old gardener born in South Runcton in 1794 . Mary Fuller was his wife and they married in 1815 , their youngest son James was also a gardener but their 23 year old son William was a brazier , a skilled craft worker in brass . The name Francis Mace appears in the lists of Unlocated Downham pubs in 1836 ,1845 and 1854 as licensee of an unnamed pub in Bridge St . Francis and Mary are both in the cemetary of St Edmunds church, he died in 1875 aged 82 and she died in 1865 aged 48.

The unusually named Thomas Withnoe , was the occupier of the premises next to Francis Mace . The Withnoes were not without troubles in their lives. Thomas was 34 , born in March , Cambs , in 1808 , and had been imprisoned for Debt in Lincoln Gaol. The Stamford Mercury of Friday 11th March 1836, under the heading Insolvent Debtors , reports Thomas Withnoe, the younger, formerly of Long Sutton , following no employment, then of March , schoolmaster, then of 2 Johnsons Ct, Fleet St , London, journeyman printer, since of March , schoolmaster`s assistant , afterward of Long Sutton, schoolmaster, and late of the same , printer , bookbinder and stationer . In 1841 he is simply a printer and stationer .

But there was good with the bad and earlier in the Stamford Mercury of Friday , 5th Feb , 1830, "On Monday se` night, at Long Sutton, Mr Thomas Withnoe , son of Mr Withnoe , schoolmaster of March , to Mary Daffern, widow of Mr Daffern , blacksmith, of the same place , married ." Mary Daffern had been Mary Warwick , and had married William Daffern in 1827

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only for him to die a year later aged 40. Later in the summer of 1830 Thomas Withnoe`s mother died aged 47, wife of Mr Thomas Withnoe of March , schoolmaster . It would appear that the elder Thomas Withnoe had also found life a struggle , and the Cambridge Chronicle of June 1827 reports , that the said Thomas has assigned by Indenture , all his household furniture , stock in trade, and all his personal estate and effects whatsoever to George Ball of March , fellmonger, and Thomas Elliott of the same, yeoman, for the benefit of his creditors . Thomas`s daughter 19 year old Mary Ann`s death appears in the Bury and Norwich Post of April the same year . The same solicitor who dealt with this , Edmund Barley , also dealt with the conclusion of this case, in 1835 when Thomas Withnoe`s estate is advertised for the creditors thereof to contact Edmund Barley . Thomas Withnoe senior was described as deceased .

Hard to live with, these business failures were reported not only in the local papers , but in the London Gazette of 1841 Thomas was described as of Downham Market , printer and stationer , as well as newspaper agent , and licenced dealer in tobacco and cigars There also was a mention of Thomas Withnoe as licensee of the fancifully named pub , the Lady of the Lake , in Bridge St , King`s Lynn in 1846 . Mary Withnoe , his long suffering wife , died aged 50 in Long Sutton in 1849 and two years later in 1851 Thomas himself is a lodger and widower living in Albert St , Wisbech . His daughter Mary appeared in the 1861 census living with her uncle Thomas Warwick , and his daughter Eliza appeared in the 1851 census as a servant in a household in March . After his wife`s death , Thomas seemed to have moved to Dudley in Worcestershire, he was there in 1858 when he returned to administer the estate of £50 of his late wife Mary . No reason was given for the 9 year gap between her death and his administration . Thomas survived until 1860 when he died in Dudley , Worcs. But saddest of all was the death of Thomas`s small son Tom aged 5 in 1841 who was buried aged 8 in St Edmunds in 1843. .

Another incomer with aspirations lived next door to the Withnoes . Robert Newman Murrell had been born in 1806 in Covent Garden , and married Catherine Whincop in St Nicholas, King`s Lynn , in 1832 . He described himself variously in the registers of South Lynn and King`s Lynn for each of his children`s baptisms . He was a writer of Valengers Road, or a mail guard , and by the mid 1830s , he was an attorney`s clerk and remained that or solicitor`s clerk for the rest of his life ..He lived in Bridge St with his family , elegantly named children Ashley , Robert Debenham, Sophia Whincop , from the 1841 census to his death in 1872. Both Robert and Catherine were buried in St Edmunds churchyard , he in 1872 and she in 1877

For Sarah Carter, living next to the Murrells , the busiest days of the week were Tuesday and Saturday . She and her only son William had inherited the carrier business in Bridge St from her late husband Isaac who died in 1838. For William this meant carrying goods and passengers to King`s Lynn on Tuesday , Thursday and Saturday , whilst his mother Sarah , was carrier to Wisbech on Saturdays, to Norwich and Swaffham and East Dereham each Tuesday . Of Sarah`s four daughters , two were already working as dressmaker and bonnet maker , and after Sarah`s death in 1849 , and perhaps not coincidentally three years into the

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new railway line carrying passengers and goods from King`s Lynn to Downham and further afield , they and their brother moved to Lynn Road , he taking a beer house to keep himself and his family .

Next to Chapman`s Yard and back in Bridge St ,was a barn, yard and field owned by Thomas Harris . This would have been the Thomas Harris who was described as a farmer, living in High St with his family , 27 year old Maria and a 16 month old baby , Albert , and the same Thomas Harris owner of the Castle Inn .

The last house before the White Hart , was owned by Philip Winearls and tenanted by Charles Mumford . Charles was born in 1804 in Lavenham and became a surveyor . His principal work was the Tithe maps and apportionments for many of the villages around Downham. He married in 1825 Louisa Woolnough in Sibton , Suffolk . In the 1841 census their four small children were living in Bridge St with their young governess Fanny Allcock, and two live in girl servants Lydia and Sally Banham .

On this June day , their parents Charles and Louisa Mumford were away in Ufford in Suffolk . Three days after the census , on the 9th June, Louisa Mumford`s father John, gent, died in Ufford . The four Woolnough siblings had gathered together in the family home for this sad event with Charles having to lodge with a next door neighbour for the time being . The Winearls and Mumfords were both interested in education. By 1851 young Charles aged 12 was away at boarding school in Fakenham with two Winearls sons. The previously mentioned George Richard Mumford son of George and Sarah , was also at the same school in Norwich Road, Fakenham in the 1841 census .

The Winearls were of Shouldham Thorpe and Marham , in particular Robert Winearls had owned the Smock mill at Marham and Philip who was a farmer at Shouldham . Philip and his wife are buried in St Edmunds in 1874 and 1883 respectively .

The White Hart inn was owned by Arthur Morse a scion of the Morse brewing family of Swaffham . Prior to 1822 the inn had been called the Whalebone and George Morse put it up for sale in 1847 when it was taken over by Stewart and Patteson In 1841 the licensee was John Capron or Capurn Brown . He was born c 1800 the son of John and Mary Brown (Wright) and married Jane Smith at St Edmunds in 1832 . He also appears to have been licensee of the Bridge Inn in Downham West for a short period and maybe it was whilst travelling across the bridge between the two pubs , that he fell and was drowned . John and Jane had four young children living at home in the White Hart as well as four " dealers " and two families of Irish hawkers , 21 people in all .

According to the Tithe apportionment and map , Oxley English owned the first house beyond the White Hart and his tenant was Edward Clark a 42 year old baker. However there is a John and Elizabeth Willimott on the census between the White Hart and the bakers . It may be that this John Willimott who was a hairdresser , somehow took over the running the White Hart in 1845 – 1847 to fill the gap between the death of John Capurn Brown and the sale in 1847 by

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George Morse , but he was certainly the licensee in 1847. John Willimott was the son of another John Willimott who was also a hairdresser, and married Elizabeth Ranson daughter of William Ranson , miller, at St Edmunds in 1840.

Oxley English who owned the bakers was born in 1810 and baptised at St Nicholas , King`s Lynn . He was the son of John and Mary English and in the 1851 census was still living in King`s Lynn with a footman and a house servant ; he described himself as a timber merchant . However after his death in 1884 , his will stated that he was of 19 Pall Mall and his executors were Sir Lewis Whincop Jarvis , knt , of King`s Lynn and William Floyd of Middlesex , the latter was almost certainly a relative of Oxley`s mother Mary Floyd who had married John English in Swaffham in 1802 . He left a shade over £139,000 .

Edward Clark , baker and miller , tenant of Oxley English , was born in Shouldham around 1799 , and Clarinda his wife at Stradsett . She was Clarinda daughter of John and Margaret Harper of Stradsett born 1798 . By 1841 they had 7 children all girls apart from 8 year old George, and by 1851 had a further two daughters .

The next group of houses was owned by Zachariah Stebbings, a gardener . He was listed as owner and occupier of five houses and gardens . It would seem that the appellation gardener does not mean in 1841 what it means today . In the Norfolk Chronicle of 1833 was reported the death of Frances , wife of Mr Zachariah Stebbing, seedsman and nurseryman of Downham , aged 43 . They were married in St Edmunds in 1827, she was a widow , Frances Dunham , and he a widower . In the 1841 census , two young women Mary and Sarah Dunham aged 25 and 16 are living in the Stebbing house as female servants . These were Frances Stebbing formerly Dunham`s two daughters by her first husband , William Dunham who died aged 35 in 1825 .

Zachariah Stebbings also owned a six acre nursery which is not recorded in the Tithe map apportionment but where it was may have been a plot of land off Lynn Road . And whether this was the same as the much later American Nurseries is not currently known . The 1840 Tithe map recorded that he owned this group of houses in Bridge Street and a further four tenements and gardens on the opposite side of Bridge St further down toward Andrews cottages .

One of the Stebbing`s tenants was John Brown a 44 year old grocer , sometime chandler, sometime farmer , who married Susanna Whybrow, widow , in St Edmunds in 1827 . One of the witnesses was Rachel Stebbing , possibly one of the daughters of the Brown`s landlord Zachariah . In fact Susanna before she married Thomas Wibrow in St Edmunds in 1822, was Susanna Stebbing . So it was as a mark of respect that the Browns oldest child was named Zachariah Stebbing Brown after their landlord and relative . With John and Susan was Henry , a baker, and John`s brother .

The next family to the Stebbings down Bridge Street, was William Scott, 35 , butcher . He was the third husband of his wife Martha , her first had been a Mr Robinson, the second Edward

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Simpson Stannard whom she married in St Edmunds in 1825 and thirdly William Scott who she married in 1836 also at St Edmunds .. Next door to the Scotts was Sarah Timwell, 40, a laundress with a young William Timwell aged 12 . There was no marriage for a Sarah and a Timwell or Timewell , but there was a marriage for a John Timewell, sadler, and Elizabeth Wilson , a marriage witnessed by George Garman and his soon to be wife Susan Pooley .. John and Elizabeth had a son William baptised in St Edmunds in 1828 . Could this Sarah , laundress, be a relative rather than young William`s mother . And next to them were the Wignalls, John , a gardener who no doubt worked for his landlord Zachariah Stebbing , his wife Mary and their daughter Rachel . Their daughter Rachel was baptised at Stow Bardolph in 1816 and John was described then as a lighter man . Mary his wife was Mary Snelling.

These families fill the street space between the White Hart and the Queenshead , which like the other two pubs in the street had lost its licencee within the last 5 years . In this case it was George Garman who died in 1840 aged 47, he had been the licensee of the Queenshead and on his death his widow Susannah took over the business . As well as the pub she had four small children to look after , Susanna the oldest at 10 and Frederick the youngest only 2 . Her lodgers were a mix of locals and hawkers, one in silk , one in china, a rake manufacturer, a book seller and two horse breakers and dealers .

The owner of the Queenshead was Bidy Blackburn the widow of James Blackburn whom she had married in St Edmunds in 1810 , she was Bridget daughter of James and Sarah King of Methwold . James King her father had been the owner of the Queenshead until his death in 1813 just after his daughter`s marriage . In his will of 1813 James King left the Swan at Methwold to his son James and the Queenshead to his daughter Bridget . Susannah Garman the innkeeper and her husband had been the licencee some years earlier .

At this point Paradise Road bisects Bridge St . And beyond this point , Bridge Street becomes Bridge Road. Continuing eastwards toward the river the next two properties are owned by Charles Lemmon and tenanted by Thomas and George Wood and consist of a house , garden and malthouse, and by John Hutson and others, of cottages and gardens . The position of the property known as house , garden and malthouse was approximately where Dial House and Emmerson`s garden centre are today .

The property numbered 501 which was in the tenancy of John Hutson and others , was depicted as four single oblongs on the Tithe map John Hudson or Hutson was 40 and a blacksmith living with his wife and two grown up daughters , and a nineteen year old blacksmith`s apprentice George Hitchcock , and Jane Browne, dressmaker and her young son Henry . Not one of this group are born in Norfolk. In another of these premises was Harriot Edwards, 50 , schoolmistress , and with her are Arthur Houchen son of John Houchen of Wereham , aged 7 , and John Wooll aged 6 who may have been the son of Hugh Wooll of Upwell born 1835. Next the small new family of James Scott, draper , aged 25, son of Robert Scott , also a draper of Downham , and his wife Martha formerly Puxley . They married in 1839 and had a small son Robert aged 1.

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John and Alice Wotton both 55 both described as Ind , live next door , but neither are born in Norfolk There were two uninhabited cottages between Harriot Edwards and her small school and James Scott draper , and one between the Wottons and Rebecca Gover . However , Rebecca was the wife of Robert Gover, a Wesleyan Methodist preacher who spent census night with Wm Springfield , merchant, in Stoke Ferry leaving his family in Downham. Its not clear though if the property she was living in is part of the Chapel , cottage and burial ground which is across the road from the Queenshead . Or if the Govers rented a cottage for themselves and their five children plus a young Wesleyan Methodist preacher William Blackwell

Charles Lemmon the owner of these two substantial blocks of land and premises was born in Downham in 1797 the son of William and Sarah , by 1840 Charles and his wife Hannah (Dean) were living in Shouldham and he was a farmer of substance . She was his second wife , and his first was Mary Winearls whom he married in Shouldham in 1821 .

However the house , garden and malt office was tenanted by Thomas and George Wood . This may be the George Wood of Denver who married Mary Ann , the only child of Jonathan Flower, merchant of the High St . But neither the Woods nor the Lemmon family were living in Bridge St .

Next to Rebecca Gover and her children , was Anne widow of Charles Thurston , 60 , a nurse and her daughter Mary aged 20 . Also a tenant of Charles Lemmon in one of these tenements was Jarvis Souter. He was " of Mattishall" on his marriage to Mary Parker at Longham in 1822 The surname Souter was spelled Souther in the Longham marriage register and is difficult to follow , except to note that Jarvis, Jervis, Gervas, Souther, Souter, Suter are variants and he died in 1854..

The next block of land , 503, toward the river is empty of buildings and not included on the Tithe Apportionment . The next building was owned by James Hacon who married Hannah Heythorpe at Lt Walsingham in 1802 . He was a schoolmaster . Hannah their first daughter died in 1806 and Hannah his wife died in 1809 aged 27. At the time of the 1841 census the family were living in Swaffham and he had remarried Mary possibly Herbert in Ipswich . But James Hacon`s tenant was William Jakes or Jex or Jacques , b 1793, a mustard manufacturer He married Elizabeth Nicholl who died in 1834 aged 46 and secondly Mary Ann Taylor in 1837 , he died in 1856 With the Jakes was Mary Palmer and her daughter Harriot who was born illegitimately in 1810 after an earlier illegitimate daughter Eliza born in 1807 .

William Jakes may have used the Tower mill to make his mustard . This was in Cowgate Street, " adjoining Parsonage Lane from which there is a back entrance " . What became known as Bird`s mill was not constructed until 1851 .

Next was a group of five houses owned by Daniel Phipps and tenanted by John Harper and others . Daniel Phipps was in Stow Bardolph in the 1841 census living with his wife Martha , but by the 1851 census he was described as a retired servant, 75 , a widower living with his

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daughter Catherine the wife of William Brown , builder . Daniel was another incomer being born in Enfield in Middlesex .

John Harper the tenant of Daniel Phipps was a 78 year old bricklayer. He has no family living with him but he may have been the John Harper who married in Stradsett in 1792 though by 1841 his wife Margaret Mann was dead . If so his married daughter Clarinda Clark was only a few doors away.. The other families in this group of five houses were farmers and ag labs . William Barker was the first beyond William Jakes and family and he was born in Wendling in 1807 the son of Martin and Ann Barker, and married Martha Harris in Wendling in 1826. She was from Swanton Morley and was nearly 20 years older than her husband . .

William Doubleday , farmer aged 40 was married to Sarah and on his death in 1848 she moved to Outwell to live with her son Henry aged 25 and his two small daughters . Despite his youth , her son was a widower , his wife Frances appeared to have died also in 1848 perhaps giving birth to their second daughter Alice . Another of Daniel Phipps tenants in this group of five tenements was William Horn , a 40 year old farmer born in Methwold, his wife Susan was born in Stow Bardolph and they had three children with a significant gap between the last Charles aged 4 and the first Elizabeth aged 17 which might mean that Susan was William`s second wife .

The last of Daniel Phipps tenants was Robert and Mary Rollison or Rallison he was a 69 year old cabinet maker and not born in Norfolk , he was buried in Downham in August 1841 . His next door neighbour who owned a house, garden and timber yard, was Henry Winter aged 40 , not born in the county though his wife Sarah was , and with them they have Joseph Scott a 25 year old cabinet maker`s apprentice who was no doubt working for Robert Rollison next door . Between 1841 and 1851 Henry Winter , timber merchant had fallen on harder times and he and his wife were living in Reading with their widowed daughter , he was described as `out of business` born Ely , Sarah was born Downham .

As the road gets closer to the river it also gets closer to the brickyards . The next six families were all either agricultural labourers or bricklayers or makers , except George Raby , a 25 year old butcher . . He and his wife Ann , both 25, were sharing a house with George`s sister Eliza who was married to Robert Gage , bricklayer , and their brother James Raby , 20 , a brickmaker . George , James and Eliza were the children of George and Elizabeth Raby , labourer of Downham.

Next to the young Rabys lived Henry and Jemima Sadler , they were both 45 and he was an ag lab . She had been Jemima Carter and they were married in Wimbotsham in 1816 ; by 1841 they have 7 children living at home including their eldest Emma Jane who was recorded as being blind . William Whenn or Wenn or Winn and his small family lived next door again to the Sadlers , despite only being 36 he is a widower , his wife Elizabeth nee Wilkinson having died recently , he had Elizabeth , William and Sarah to look after . He was a brickmaker and son of William and Ann Wenn of Denver .

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Plot number 408 on the tithe map apportionment shows that this land was owned by William Bennett and tenanted by William Barrack and consisted of 4 tenements . William Barrack was the son of Ann Barrack or Barrick who in 1797 married William Poll , and William the bricklayer of Bridge Road in 1841 goes by the name of William Poll, but on the apportionment is William Barrack . William married Charlotte Adams and they had at least 6 children baptised in St Edmunds as Barrack . Charlotte died in 1869 aged 74.

The next plot down Bridge Road, belongs to Thomas Wright. His tenants of cottages and orchards , were John Shinn and his wife Lydia . He was a carter born around 1790 and married Lydia Traice at St Edmunds in 1827. It is possible that this John Shinn was one of the identified rioters of the 1816 Downham riots . He would have been born c 1792 so aged 24 in 1816. Their neighbours were William and Mary Rawson , both 70 , and living with their youngest son James who like most workers at this end of Bridge Road, is a brickmaker . William Rawson was born at Upwell around 1771 and his wife Mary was described as N for not born in county and their marriage and her birth and maiden name have not yet been found . Both died in the workhouse , she in 1844 aged 79 and he in 1854 . So from the 1844 schedule of land owners and tenants of land alongside the proposed railway line, James and Mary Rawson , son and mother, had a cottage and an orchard, Robert Laws had a cottage and John Shinn had an orchard .

Also living down by the river in these cottages and tenements is Elizabeth Watson , 35 , a widow and a schoolmistress .

Next to Elizabeth Watson were the Filbys . Henry was a carpenter and he and Elizabeth nee Gotobed Gordon , married in 1835 in St Edmund`s , have three small children . Henry`s sister Elizabeth and his mother Mary were also living with them . Elizabeth Filby may be the young woman who died in the workhouse in 1851 aged 28. Their neighbour was Thomas Bridges aged 70 , described as Ind, which usually means that he had private means . He was living with his son Billy , 30 , a bricklayer and his wife Louisa nee Grimson . Billy and Louisa were married in 1837 in Aylsham . By 1851 Billy and his father Thomas have vanished and Louisa was back in Aylsham , widowed , with her parents . There is a death of a Thomas Bridges in the Freebridge Lynn district in the September quarter of 1844 and the death of a William Bridges also in the Freebridge Lynn district in the September quarter of 1847.

Thomas Wright the landlord was by 1851 a bank agent living in the High Street .He married Margaret Dalton in St Margaret`s , King`s Lynn in 1810 This single property he owned at the business end of Bridge Road may well have been an investment with the railways in mind .

At this point the next four plots of Bridge Road continue down past what is now Knight`s bakery , down to the river itself . There are four large plots and all belong to Maria Juler . She was an interesting character . The daughter of John Mann , farmer, probably born Stradsett around 1786 , she married first in 1810 Richard Kemp, brickmaker , and they had six children starting with Leah in 1812 who was followed by four sisters and a brother . Maria was widowed before 1830 and she was recorded in the Land Tax Assessment as owning a house

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and land in her own right . In 1839 she married widower Henry Juler a bricklayer whose wife Isabella had died and left him with two sons . Henry and Maria do not appear to have had children between them , and he died in 1847 . Maria herself died in 1868 and is buried at St Edmund`s aged 82.

The last of her tenants alongside the river , after John Dyson , the engineer , her own orchard , Thomas Dyson her tenant at the brickyard , was James Haylett . The Dysons are clearly expecting the railway and are tenants of land and the brickyard down by the river where the railway will shortly be built . James and Margaret Haylett and their seven children were the final tenants right down by the river . As with so many other heads of households, James Haylett died in 1849 and Margaret his widow moved to Church Lane taking up business as a coal dealer .

John Dyson was 70 , an engineer , with his wife Elizabeth , 60, (who was recorded as being buried in Downham in March 1842 aged 76, and her son John William buried in Dec 1843 aged 44).and their daughter Elizabeth , 35, and they live next door to the brickyard owned by Maria Juler and tenanted by their son Thomas. It would appear that William Talbot a brickmaker actually lives at the brickyard , and he was sharing this industrial area with Thomas Dyson , although the Dysons lived up in Market Place . John Dyson was not born in the county and may well be identified as the Yorkshire born father of Thomas Dyson who was on the board of the Lynn and Ely Railway Company. Thomas Dyson , son of John , described himself as a civil engineer at his marriage in 1840 , as widower, at St Edmund`s , to Dinah Wright . She was the daughter of John Wright , farmer . Thomas`s first wife Mary Ann , aged 30, and his 5 month old son Thomas died in March and April 1832 .

Oddly with the building of the railway so close , Thomas Dyson sold using Mumford and Casebow, his entire stock of bricks etc in the Michaelmas sale of 1844 . The sales particulars included " 185,000 patent pressed white, best white, second white, mingle, drain and fire bricks " plus huge numbers of drainage tiles , flat tiles, common floor bricks, polished floor bricks, arched tiles, a variety of sizes and shapes of pavements , pantiles etc together with various pumps and capstans and two pile engines . Mr Dyson was reported as " declining the brick making business."

William Talbot was from a family of watermen who earned their living transporting goods up and down the river Great Ouse . This William was a brickmaker however, the most skilled trade and he had married Ann Ollet at St Edmund`s . Their daughter Harriott , 11 in 1841, was living in the household of Mr Challis , schoolmaster, at Ten Mile Bank in 1851 as both William and Ann Talbot were dead in 1844 and 1845 respectively . Perhaps William Talbot saw the coming railway as the destroyer of the canal and river transport businesses as indeed it was , and joined the brick trade . Brickmaking in Downham was big business at this time .

" When a brickground at Downham Market, Norfolk, was offered for sale in 1821, the kiln on the premises was brick-built, was capable of containing 40,000 bricks, and sufficient clay had already been raised to make 300,000 to 400,000 bricks that season. This suggests up to ten

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firings in that kiln during the months of Brick-burning . " Ref NRO .. It is not clear who bought the brickyard in 1821 if it was the Dysons or someone who later sold on to them .

Bridge Road now ends at the bridge , and the land on the opposite side of the road belonged to the Batchcroft Charity . This was the bequest of Thomas Batchcroft in the 1660s which stipulated that land must be bought with his legacy of £100 which would earn £5 a year for the poor of Downham .. Today Bird`s mill stands on the site. And today the next houses are Railway cottages , formerly known as Andrews cottages . But on the 1841 census there are a number of families living at this end of the road whose names do not correspond with the tenants of the landowners of these plots of land.

Much belatedly , the walk can now continue.

The blockage in many senses was the bridge. We have a bridge. However behind this simple fact is a whole history of fen drainage, Government reluctance to fund a new bridge and the opening and closing of the two old unsafe bridges. And the enlargement of St John`s Eau into the Relief Channel we see today .