SMHS JOURNAL 20

THE ANNUAL MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHWOLD MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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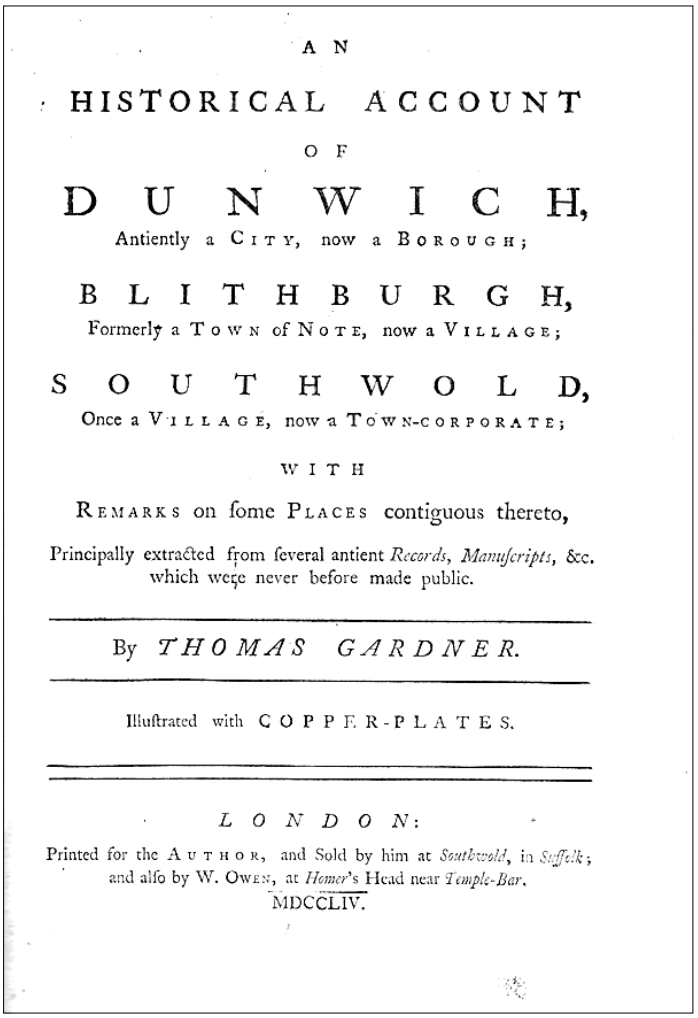

A N

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

O F

D U N W I C H,

Antiently a CITY, now a BOROUGH;

B L I T H B U R G H,

Formerly a TOWN of NOTE, now a VILLAGE;

S O U T H W O L D,

Once a VILLAGE, now a TOWN-CORPORATE;

WITH

REMARKS on ſome PLACES contiguous thereto,

Principally extracted from ſeveral antient *Records*, *Manuſcripts*, &c. which were never before made public.

By *THOMAS GARDNER.*

Illuſtrated with COPPER-PLATES.

LONDON:

Printed for the AUTHOR, and Sold by him at *Southwold*, in *Suffolk*; and alſo by W. OWEN, at *Homer*'s Head near *Temple-Bar*.

MDCCLIV.

Reading Gardner's *History*

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE…

Southwold's little-known role in the war work of Bletchley Park

An appreciation of Don Pope

A wartime plan that could have devastated rural life in our area

Mischief and misadventure in Georgian Southwold

Post-war shopkeeping in Southwold

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SOUTHWOLD MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL

Issue no 20 - June 2020

Editor: Paul Scriven, MBE

Design: Barry Tolfree

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EDITORIAL

"PUBLISH…you'll never conclude research". Such was my article on the Battle Training Area as I found in my possession another W.I. essay which showed the letters to householders were distributed by WRNS personnel.

This 20th edition of the Journal is yet another reminder of the wide variety of subjects written by those who so kindly contribute. I thank them all.

One regular contributor was the late Mrs Cynthia Wade and I miss our regular telephone chats. She loved doing research for her varied articles. Cynthia was a good and loyal friend of this society. She served for a time as stewards' coordinator, and frequently 'on duty' as a steward at the museum, often filling a gap in the rota. She also did door duty for the lectures and at one time was a valued member of the museum cataloguing group.

I am delighted that from our 21st edition, Barry Tolfree has agreed to become editor. He has brought us into the 21st Century and given us a journal worthy of a modern organisation.

Paul Scriven

DO YOU HAVE A LOCAL HISTORY PROJECT JUST WAITING TO BE RESEARCHED?

We'd love to have the opportunity to publish it in the 2021 issue of SMHS Journal.

Remember the Museum library and archive is open to Members every Thursday afternoon from 2.00 pm (and at other times by arrangement) when our archivist, Bob Jellicoe, is in attendance to provide help and guidance. Email barrytolfree@outlook.com

We are pleased to announce that PDFs of SMHS JOURNAL ISSUES 17—20 may now be downloaded from the Museum's website: www.southwoldmuseum.org
Click on 'Members Area'

SOUTHWOLD'S SECRET Y STATION

Stuart Raynor reveals the little-known story of Southwold's vital role in intelligence gathering during the last war

The existence of a Naval Y Station at Southwold, the 'Y' standing for Wireless Intercept (WI), has only recently come to light. Archive documentation has been declassified and photographs of the Southwold W/T Station, taken on 24th October 1943 {Ref. 1], when the station was still operational, have been digitally published by the Imperial War Museum. These photographs have stimulated people's curiosity to find out where the Y Station was located; what the huts, ancillary masts and radio equipment were used for; and why were the Southwold Station aerials so special?

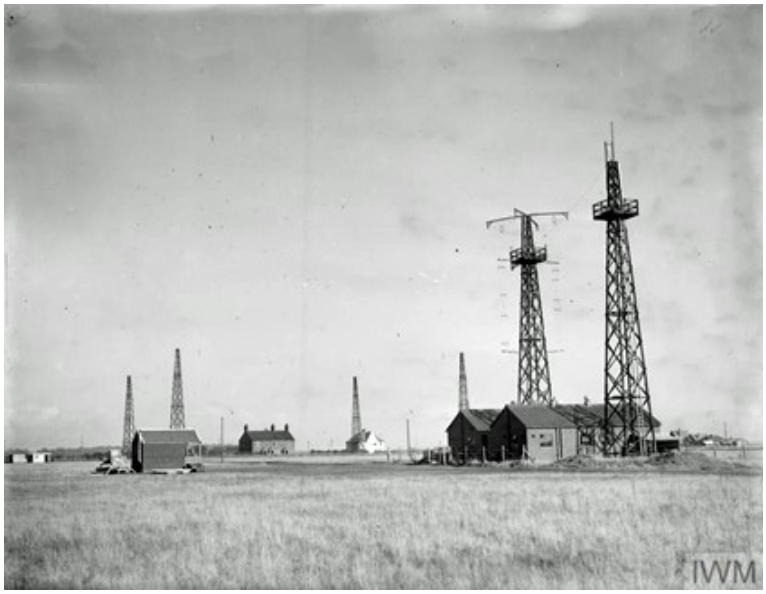


Fig.1 - Intercept Huts – Easton Bavents 1 © IWM A 26118

Intercept recordings (http://www.cdvandt.org/fading-wartime-sounds.htm), made at Southwold in 1943 have also been unearthed, making Southwold one of the best documented Y Stations in the UK, which is extremely rare, if not unique amongst these very secret establishments.

A Y Station was established at Southwold in February or early March 1941, in response to Nore Command's request for a chain of Coastal Stations to be set up along the East coast to intercept R/T VHF signals from German Schnellboot (S-Boot, or in English E-boat) that were making frequent sorties against convoys in the East Coast Channel {Ref. 2}. The S-Boot bases were located just over 100 miles immediately across the North Sea from Southwold at Den Helder, Ijmuiden, Rotterdam and Ostend.

Southwold was specifically involved in the interception of enemy wireless signals classified as:

Wireless Telegraphy (W/T – Morse);

Radio Telephony (R/T – voice);

'Noise' intercepts (non-communication signals such as radar and jamming).

All intercepted transmissions were logged and recorded at the Y Stations for passing onto the next intelligence stage. All coded and encrypted messages were initially passed directly to Station X, but by 1941, as the quantity of intercept messages increased, and at about the time Southwold became operational, the messages were passed to Station X via the Y Station's regional Intelligence Centre (IC), which for Southwold was initially Great Yarmouth or Harwich until 1943, when the IC was located at Chatham, within Nore's Command Centre.

Interceptions that did not need decoding/ decryption, such as plain language R/T, were passed directly through to the IC for immediate operational response and action. However all intercept logs and records, including plain language R/T were all copied to Station X on a daily basis for historic analysis.

Station X is now better known as Bletchley Park where Southwold's encrypted messages were deciphered into German within Hut 8, where Alan Turing led the naval cryptanalysis section, and were then passed onward to Hut 4 for translating and intelligence analysis. Churchill called Bletchley 'the Geese that laid the golden eggs - but never cackled'. However, what is less well known, it was the Y Service that fed these Golden Geese.

The threat of invasion still lingered when the Southwold Y Station was first established at Stone House on Gun Hill, a large house overlooking the sea. At the time Stone House was surrounded by the Royal Artillery, who in late 1941 manned the two 6-inch gun emplacement at the other end of Gun Hill, next to the White House; whilst the 2nd/ 4th South Lancashire Regiments were stationed in and around Southwold, being responsible for the local invasion defences. Even with all these potential protectors, the Wrens had standing orders to destroy equipment and fall back to a safe position, should a German invasion fleet suddenly appear off Southwold. At the time, Y intercepts were the main means of advance warning and if an invasion had started the Y Station was to be disbanded. It was not until 1942 when the surface radar chain was introduced that the Y Station early warning role was superseded.

The coastal Y Stations were staffed by Wrens because the men were required at sea where the German linguists performed the same function under the name of 'Headache' whilst the W/T operators provided HF/ DF, otherwise known as Huff-Duff to detect nearby U-boat or surface craft transmissions. The linguist Wrens had to be fluent in German, a good ear to be able to detect and intercept faint or garbled signals and a disposition which called for patience and tenacity during long periods of inactivity, but for quick adrenalin reaction and response when action was joined. These linguists were young, most were in their early 20s, who had lived in Germany or Switzerland on a permanent basis or had been on holiday or stayed there for a year as part of their university degree course. After only a 2-week course in R/T

traffic and German nautical terms with English equivalents they were likely to hear, they were designated to a Y Station.

26/27 Jan	First indication of E-boats from Gorleston and Southwold at 21:29. On account of bearings signalled from shore, Quorn (Hunt class Destroyer) on patrol 7 fired starshell. It is inferred that E-boats realising that their presence had been detected turned east and returned to harbour, particularly as the weather was deteriorating. This theory was borne out by decrease in signal strength.
17/18 Feb	Garths' (Hunt class Destroyer) first indication that there were E-boats about was a signal at 23:34 from shore, giving area of activity as being off Southwold. 4 minutes later bearing 135O/1 from Gorleston was sent. On these signals, Garth made south as fast as possible to get on the scene of action. Only shore stations were able to show that it was Rudiger that was sunk, despite prisoners' claim that it was Sepp
13/14 Mar	Southwold's traffic at 02:38 indicated minelaying. Convoy was therefore told to anchor until channel had been swept. A minefield in the swept channel was discovered and cleared.
14/15 Apr	S-boots sighted by aircraft at 00:10. Next confirmation of their presence and general direction derived from Southwold and Winterton. Ships were not then in contact. Minefield since swept at QZX 977 (25 mines swept to date) was suspected solely through shore stations.

Table .1 – Naval Actions Intercepted at Southwold Y Station 1943 {Ref. 2}

The W/T Wrens training involved 6 months of receiving, but not transmitting, Morse, where the expected pass for selection was 25 words per minute, but candidates also had to be able to work under pressure for long periods of time, which unfortunately not everyone achieved. They were also trained in the disciplined procedures used by the German Naval Wireless Stations and the U-boats.

Southwold, although a Naval Y Station, also intercepted signals from German aircraft as they used similar radio frequencies to the S-boots. Southwold worked in conjunction with the adjacent Gorleston RAF Y Station, helping at times when Gorleston was particularly busy and there were few Naval signals to intercept. Gorleston was a dual-purpose station with Wrens also stationed there. A dedicated telephone line was laid between Stone House and West Kingsdown (RAF Y Station HQ) in May 1943 {Ref. 3}, allowing intelligence on Luftwaffe flights over East Anglia to be passed directly through to the main RAF Intelligence Centre. Luftwaffe activity was also of interest to the Navy for any aircraft grouping to attack convoys or dropping mines in the convoy channels.

The Navy identified the need to monitor signals that were non-verbal radio transmissions, typically called 'Noise' in 1942, the first watch room being set up at Abbot's Cliff near Dover. Some months later similar watchrooms were established at Southwold and Ventnor (IOW). Southwold was selected because of its location as the most Easterly Y Station closest to the Continent and it was a suitably large house that could accommodate the additional W/T Wrens required to operate a separate 'Noise' watchroom. In addition it was in a relatively quiet area as far as potential signal interference was concerned, compared to stations closer to London.

The 'Noise' watchroom at Stone House was of an improvised nature and in June 1943, approval was given to build four combined Y and 'Noise' stations to be located at Southwold, Abbot's Cliff, Ventnor and Coverack {Ref. 2}. This was when the Southwold Y station expanded to the new site on Easton Bavents Cliffs, approximately 1.45 miles to the north of Stone House. The new facilities included two watch huts, aerial masts and towers plus other facilities. Easton Bavents became operational either in late 1943, or early 1944. This coincided with the build up to Operation Overlord, where increased ability for interceptions were necessary for the event that the German Navy came out to attack coastal convoys in the lead up to the Normandy landings, or to attack the invasion fleet on D-Day itself.

In the build up to Operation Overlord, the Black Watch had replaced the South Lancashire Regiments and was stationed in Southwold and the surrounding area, with their HQ at St Felix School. They used the cliffs just under the new watchroom at Easton Bavents for invasion training exercises. The Flag Officer of D-Day's Force 'L' was also stationed at St Felix; Force 'L' comprised the second wave of the Eastern Task Force, which included transporting army personnel for the assault on Caen, the Black Watch forming part of this force. King George visited Easton Bavents in February 1944, bit it is not known if he visited the Y watchrooms?

The move to the new watchroom at Easton Bavents was driven by its role as a 'Noise' Station, although its original purpose was still maintained with continued VHF as well as HF R/T and W/T watches. 'Noise' intercepts were normally at very high frequencies, such as German radar installations or were jamming signals to obscure other transmissions. 'Noise' intercepts were the foundation in developing Allied Radio Counter Measures (RCM), such as the jamming of German radar trained artillery during amphibious landings.

Fig.2 - Noise Watchroom © IWM A 26125

After the new Easton Bavents watchrooms were operational, Stone House remained the Wrennery, where the released watchrooms were probably soon used as dormitories to house the additional Wrens to operate the expanded facilities. A complement of up to 50 Wrens was required to maintain a 3-watch 24-hour coverage of R/T, W/T and 'Noise' monitoring. Unlike some of the South coast Y Stations that became surplus to requirements as the

Western front moved across the Continent towards Germany, Southwold as part of the Nore command was very much operational as S-Boots continued to harass the coastal convoys into the early months of 1945. At the time the photographs were taken, Southwold was the largest remaining coastal Y station, although with a reduced complement of 30 Wrens.

As well as the persistent S-boot threat, new threats arose along the East Coast in the last months of the war. V1s were air-launched just off Southwold by modified Heinkel III bombers in September and October 1944, V2 launchings from Den Helder could be seen on their way to London and 2 man Seehunde U-boats based at Ijmuiden attacked the coastal convoys, accounting for the last vessels to be sunk off East Anglia. Southwold continued to intercept signals from German occupied Holland and the North German coast up to VE day, when operations ceased in May 1945, and the station was closed and decommissioned, together with the rest of the Nore Command Y intercept services {Ref. 4}.

In a Naval review of the Y Service capabilities, the Nore command Y Station Wren officers were considered to be most capable, bringing VHF interception and collaboration with the convoy ships to a fine art where again and again convoys were given warnings that the enemy was laying in wait or minelaying ahead of them. It was considered incontestable that the VHF Y organisation in the Nore command saved the country an inestimable number of ships and lives {Ref. 5}. With regard to the Engima transmissions intercepted at Southwold, it is doubtful we will ever know what they uncovered.

Stuart Raynor

[1] Imperial War Museum Photographs of Southwold W/T Station, taken 24th October 1944 by Lieutenant J. E. Russell as part of the Admiralty Official Collection; Catalogue A 26118 – A 26129;

[2] A History of the R/T 'Y' Organisation Ashore and Afloat, July 1940 to May 1945, TNA HW8/99

[3] The History of British Sigint 1914-1945, Vol I – F. Birch [ISBN: 9854302717]

[4] Various memos, Register No. M 057884/44, Director of Signals Division 06 Oct 1944; Minute Sheet No 2 28 Jan 1945; letter Director of Signals 06 Jun 1945;

[5] Coastal Y Stations, TNA HW50/31

NEIGHBOUR

Chambers' Concise Dictionary- 'neighbour: a person who lives near another'.

It seems today that for many people that is all a neighbour is. The pace of work and life is so fast that people do not have enough time to chat and get to know others around them, or possibly do not want to, preferring to stay remote and isolated in their own little boxes. Here, in Southwold and Reydon there seems to be a sense of community, so perhaps that is not the case.

When I moved to Reydon, my next door neighbours were Don Pope and his wife Joy. Don seemed to be a gentle friendly little man in his late 70's, but not over communicative. He had a strong community spirit, shown by always putting entries into the village show (often winning in the flower and vegetable classes) and, on appropriate days, standing outside the Post Office with his charity collection tin. He specialised in growing dahlias, and was once heard complaining that he had only been able to grow 54 varieties that year, not the 57 that he had hoped for. They were planted around his front garden, always a delight to see.

Don was born in 1924 and grew up in East London bordering on Epping Forest.

Once, when chatting to him outside his open front door, I noticed that he had a large picture of a Liberator aircraft, signed by the aircrew, hanging in his hall. I guessed that he had flown in that aircraft type during World War II, possibly for Coastal Command, or on bomber raids, so asked him about it. Quite understandably, he didn't want to talk about it, but said that he had flown in Italy. I asked if he had been involved in the supply drops to the Poles during the Warsaw uprising of 1944 and he said he had. It was a terrible business and he was annoyed, not at my curiosity, but that the aircrew had flown four long operations in two days, but had only been credited with two. The losses were high and he was lucky to survive.

After he died in 2012, Joy let me have a quick look at his flight log, so with the few facts from this, I was able to research and complete the story.

Don joined the R.A.F. in World War II, and was sent to Rhodesia to learn to be a pilot under the Empire Training Scheme. This training ceased when he landed his Tiger Moth upside down with his instructor in it, so he became a bombardier (bomb aimer) instead. In Summer 1944 he was posted to Foggia airfield in southern Italy to join 31 Squadron South African Air Force which had been part of the Desert Air Force. Together with 24 and 34 Squadrons, they flew Consolidated B24 Liberator aircraft which were 4-engined, heavy, long-range, bombers.

His first operation was on the night of 25/26 August 1944, and was an attack on the railway yards and canal at Ravenna, followed by 13 more attacks at night, mostly on railway targets in northern Italy, but also in Bulgaria, and airfields in Greece throughout September.

After the supply drops to the Poles in the Warsaw area on 21st and 22nd October, Don was involved in attacks on railway targets, but also supply drops to partisans in Yugoslavia until 6th December, when his tour of duty ended.

Don returned to England, was demobbed, and married Joy in November 1945. Like his father, he joined London Transport, eventually becoming garage inspector. He and Joy had a daughter Susan, and a son Derek. While working for London Transport, he had been an active member of its coarse angling society, but his real passion was his garden which continued after he retired and moved to Reydon in 1987.

More than 50,000 aircrew were killed in World War II, so Don regarded himself very lucky to have survived and to enjoy a relatively quiet life. His bungalow and garden in Reydon has been developed by new owners and looks quite different now, but in my imagination, I can still see Don tending his dahlias, hanging inverted plastic coffee cups on the cane supports to catch those earwigs.

Peter Moore

Don and Joy were members of our Society and were always 'on duty' and, with a welcoming smile, collected the entrance money at our Summer and Winter lectures .

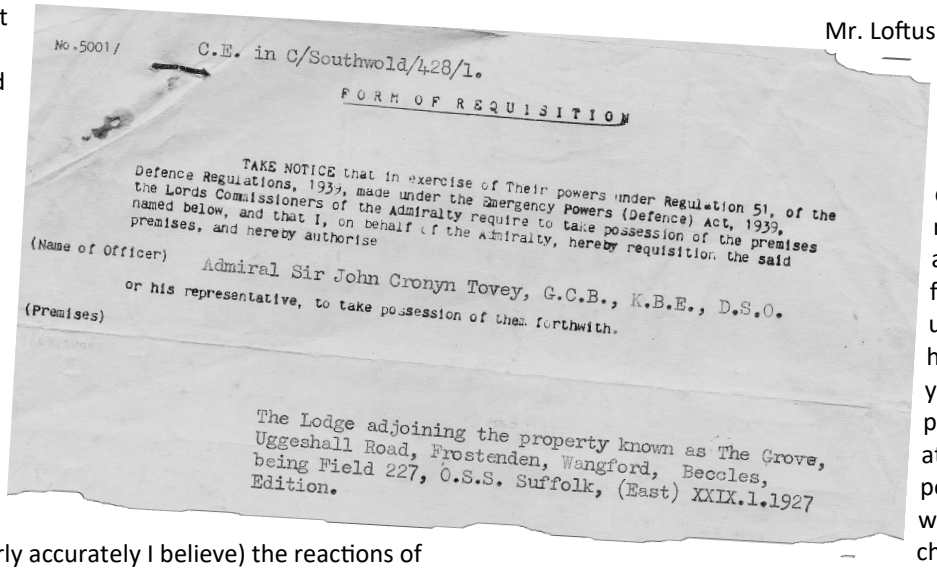
HOW THE AREA COULD HAVE CHANGED

Paul Scriven recalls a month of acute anxiety for a rural community when it seemed that everything that represented home was about to be wrenched away

A document in my possession dated 28 September 1943, and addressed to my mother led to a very worrying period for her and many other homes and families. It was headed 'Form of Requisition' and issued by the Admiralty in the name of Admiral Sir John Tovey GCB KBE DSO.

For an area of around 6000 acres, 30 farms and 180 houses (roughly 800 people) from Covehithe to half a mile short of the Southwold Borough boundary was to be commandeered for the Southwold Assault Training Area. This was stated to have a sea frontage of about 5000 yards and an inland depth of about 8000 yards. It would become effective in about a month from the date of the Requisition form.

An office was set up, or proposed to be set up, at 49, High Street, Southwold with a staff of 12 land officers for the dispossessed to get assistance and advice. They would also deal with processing compensation claims which were detailed for farmers, householders, and businesses.



No.5001/ C.E. in C/Southwold/428/1.

FORM OF REQUISITION

TAKE NOTICE that in exercise of Their powers under Regulation 51, of the Defence Regulations, 1939, made under the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act, 1939, the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty require to take possession of the premises named below, and that I, on behalf of the Admiralty, hereby requisition the said premises, and hereby authorise

(Name of Officer) Admiral Sir John Cronyn Tovey, G.C.B., K.B.E., D.S.O.

or his representative, to take possession of them forthwith.

(Premises)

The Lodge adjoining the property known as The Grove, Uggeshall Road, Frostenden, Wangford, Beccles, being Field 227, O.S.S. Suffolk, (East) XXIX.1.1927 Edition.

In her book "A Country Family at War", Hilda Boggis related this incident and 're-constructs' (fairly accurately I believe) the reactions of neighbours as they gathered together following receipt of the document. I know that my mother cycled with another lady to many places, as far out as Yoxford, in an attempt to find alternative accommodation - without success. My father, who was serving with the Royal Artillery, was given compassionate leave to come to mother's aid.

In my book "A Valley of Frogs; Frostenden" with permission of her son, I quoted from a W.I. competition essay by Mrs R.A. Daniels of Green Farm, Frostenden which summed up the whole situation. An officer from the East Suffolk War Agricultural Committee ("Warag") had visited the farm. The whole matter was 'strictly secret'. The 'Warag' sent 4 threshing machines, hay and straw balers to get existing crops in the area harvested, burning any unrequired straw. Householders began digging up their garden produce. Some people did find alternative accommodation and moved or went to stay with family members elsewhere.

On Monday 28th September (same day?) at 7 pm a meeting was held at White House Farm when Admiral Taylor explained the reasons for the land being taken and why so many people were being ruthlessly turned out of their homes at short notice. Clearly other meetings were held elsewhere and Admiralty Staff attended these as did the M.P. for the Lowestoft Constituency, Mr. P. C. Loftus. The latter had already met Lord Cranbrook (Deputy Regional Commissioner).

A number of other locations were also to be requisitioned from the Moray Firth to the Bristol Channel. These were in order that British and American assault forces for 'Operation Overlord' could receive adequate assault training with firing. As far as the Southwold area was concerned training would start shortly. "(It is) hoped, but cannot be guaranteed, that the training areas will be able to revert to normal conditions about next summer. Some may have to be kept for further training".

Mr. Loftus wrote to, and met, The First Lord of the Admiralty, (Sir) A.V. Alexander, expressing his concerns that having motored around the area, there were farmers who had built up good TT dairy herds over 30 or 40 years and were in the process of selling them at Norwich Market. He pointed out that there were 3 ancient parish churches in the area, and Lowestoft had already been subjected to bombing. He suggested the area south from Southwold to near Felixstowe which was almost a continuous belt of heather and gorse common be used. Confidential letters had been sent by him to the editors of the "*Lowestoft Journal",* "*Beccles & Bungay Journal*", the "*Eastern Daily Press*" and the "*East Anglian Daily Times*" asking them not to publish anything they might hear.

With large troop movements and vehicles including tanks, it would be difficult to keep the whole matter secret as not only were the local families affected aware, but so were many of their relatives and from those seeking alternative farms or houses elsewhere.

"I would venture to suggest however that after the exercises have been in progress for a short time the enemy may possibly, from aerial observations know as much as the man in the street in Lowestoft." (P.C.L. 26 Sept.1943). "the consequences which I apprehend from utilising this area of the coast for the continuous practising of landing operations under cover of naval and aerial bombardment (I understand it is proposed to practise several days and

nights each week, though I doubt if the very variable weather on the East Coast , especially in the winter months, will allow of this to be carried out continuously". The response was that "We do not think the enemy will specialise in attacking troops on exercises. They may well try to keep a close eye on the beaches but this would be the situation anywhere. They may also attempt to attack the concentrations of landing craft by day or night bombing but we shall have to rely on the anti-aircraft and fighter defences". It was expected that the exercises would commence on 1st December.

However, the objection to the proposed alternative area was that the rivers Deben, Ore, Alde and Dunwich(?) precluded adequate exits from the beaches.

By 5th October it was decided not to fire over the land, the area will be used as a training area for manoeuvres without firing and that it will be possible to continue farming operations. Such requisitioning does not entail moving any of the population. These comments were from the Director of Local Defence who asked that these remain confidential until letters have been issued.

From the Ministry of Home Security (Herbert Morrison) came a letter to the First Lord which summarised the whole matter from 20th September when the informal warning was given until "2nd October when farmers and others concerned were informed by the Admiralty that it was now uncertain whether the area would, in fact, be required, that the requisitions were in abeyance, and that no decision would be possible before 1st November". He referred to the good agricultural land involved. He protested at the sudden change of plan and how it had placed the Deputy Regional Commissioner (Lord Cranbrook) in a very awkward position and "that any future case a change of plan will not be announced without consultation with my Department and the Regional Commissioner". Several letters were sent in response to Morrison.

The whole matter of training areas was then referred to the Prime Minister and on 2nd November the Cabinet issued a memo detailing other areas to be used whilst the Southwold area would be for "assault training without firing".

As Mrs Daniels stated in her essay "On Saturday 10th October however there were "good tidings of great joy" that the idea had been postponed for a month and then followed the official notice that it had all been cancelled. It had caused such great anxiety which took a long time to overcome. The reason for the change was never made public".

The Admiralty file was embargoed until 1972.There seemed to be nothing in the Suffolk Record Office, nor retrospectively in the press, or other publications, and it remained a mystery until I found this file existed in the National Archives (ADM 1/14974). I do not think this tells the whole story as so many government departments were involved and there are probably documents/correspondence in other wartime files. It is, however, doubtful whether they would add much to what we now know.

And so…… I remain in the house where, as a small boy, these events had unfolded around me.

Paul Scriven © 2019

"A Melancholy Case of Drowning", Halesworth Times, 1861

In 1844, Southwold's extensive brewing and malting business goes under the hammer following the death of its near-bankrupt owner, William Crisp. The buyer is William Woodley (memorialised in Woodley's Yard) who forks out the modest sum of £2,802 (about £360K in today's money). Woodley brings in his friend, Samuel Gayfer, a Walberswick miller and coal merchant, to run it for him. '*Gayfer and Woodley, Brewers'* is born. Seven years on, Samuel feels bullish enough about the firm's prospects to buy his partner out. Maybe too bullish. He promptly collapses with a stroke and dies. Samuel's son, George Eworthy Gayfer is still only 19 and certainly doesn't have the experience to run this unwieldy brewing empire himself, so the ownership stays with Samuel's reluctant executors who try hard but unsuccessfully to sell it, while young George is given some sort of young exec' role. George develops a genuine passion for his company's product. Unfortunately, he exercises it principally in the Crown with his landlord mate, George Vincent. By the time he's 25, he's in there most nights till closing time and well beyond. The routine is this. George sets off for work in the morning from Walberswick and heads for the ferry. As he's helped out on the Southwold side by Ferryman George Todd he says breezily: "Oh, by the way, George, might be a bit late tonight. Leave the boat unlocked for me; there's a good chap." "Aye, aye, Sir," replies George, who has become well familiar with this arrangement. He has a second boat and doesn't mind rowing across next day to tow back the one Gayfer will have abandoned.

On Friday night, June 7th 1861 it's tankards as usual at the Crown and it's midnight before Gayfer heads to the estuary – three hours too late for Ferryman Todd who will have gone off duty at 9 after his 16-hour shift. The young man is staggering a bit and, landlord Vincent observes, "he was not *incapable* through drink, but he was *excited* by drink…He could walk pretty well."

George Gayfer doesn't get home that evening. Nor the next. The upturned ferry boat is found bobbing about just outside the river mouth, but it is a fortnight before fisherman Ben Palmer hauls a bloated body into his boat at four in the morning, a quarter mile off Southwold beach. He recognises it at once even though, as The Halesworth Times noted, "it was much disfigured and in an advanced state of decomposition." There had been a strong ebb tide at the time of Gayfer's disappearance and the speculation is that, in his intoxicated state, he had let go of one of the oars and was swept downstream, finally capsizing on the bar. Ferryman Todd observed wryly: (Mr Gayfer) "was well able to manage a boat... if he was sober." A verdict of accidental death was recorded, and Mr Todd was instructed to discontinue the practice of leaving his boat unlocked at night.

Not long after this 'melancholy' incident, the problematic brewery at last finds a buyer in Samuel Haiden Fitch. His fortunes, in both running it and selling it, turn out to be no more successful than those of his predecessors… It is not till a decade later that the name 'Adnams' first emerges and that's a rather longer story.

Barry Tolfree

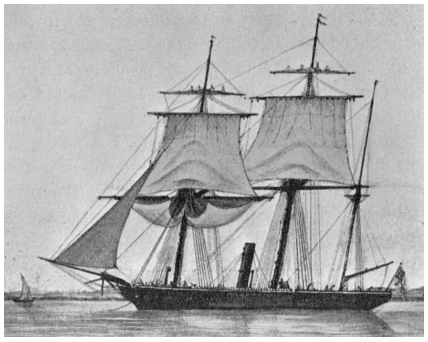
The Wayth Story

A bundle of ancient documents has opened up a vivid window on

Georgian and Victorian family life in one corner of Southwold writes Barry Tolfree

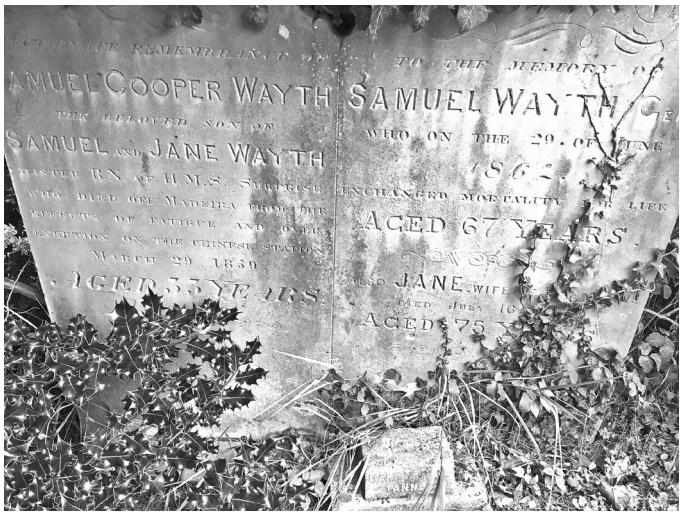
I have long been mildly intrigued by the wording on a double gravestone a few yards to the right of the South door of St Edmund's. The left-hand stone memorialises Samuel Cooper Wayth, aged 33, three years married, Master RN of HMS *Surprise,* who died off Madeira "from the effects of fatigue and over-exertion on the Chinese Station, March 29th, 1859". His parents whose deaths are recorded on the adjacent stone, both outlived him: Samuel Senior (Gentleman) died in 1864 and his wife Jane in 1877 aged 67 and 75 respectively.

What intrigued me was the use of the term 'over-exertion' which, to modern ears, evokes nothing more than, perhaps, some moderately injudicious weight training - an unlikely cause of death. HMS Surprise, however, was a gun ship involved in the Second Opium War and, according to RN records, Samuel was 'Second Master'. It's not hard to imagine that this had been a high-stress, high-risk and physically gruelling tour whose effects finally caught up with Samuel on the *Surprise's* homeward voyage via Madeira where he collapsed. He was transferred to the transport ship *Princess Charlotte* to convey him to Plymouth, but he died *en route.*



HMS Surprise was a sail & steam gunboat and was launched in 1856 just three years before Samuel Cooper Wayth's death.

The name Wayth cropped up again when Jane, one of the pharmacists at No 18 Queen Street, knowing my interest in local history, loaned me a considerable pile of title deeds, wills and other legal documents relating to their property, No 18 Queen Street. (The Queen in 'Queen Street', incidentally, long predates Queen Victoria and may refer to Queen Anne 1702-1714.)* The earliest of these documents is inscribed on a beautiful, perfectly preserved heavy parchment dated 11th April 1772 in the reign of George III, 17 years before the French Revolution started and three years before the birth of Jane Austen. It records, in antique script, the sale of the property by its freeholder, Excise Officer, William Sheppard to a 30-year-old 'House Carpenter' named Francis Wayth. (Later deeds suggest that the property was very much bigger than the current No 18 but more of that later.) The cost was £47 of "good and lawful money of Great Britain", the equivalent of only about £7,000 today but quite a purchase for a humble tradesman. I wondered if I could connect this wood-working Wayth, born 1742 to the unfortunate captain who perished nearly 120 years later.



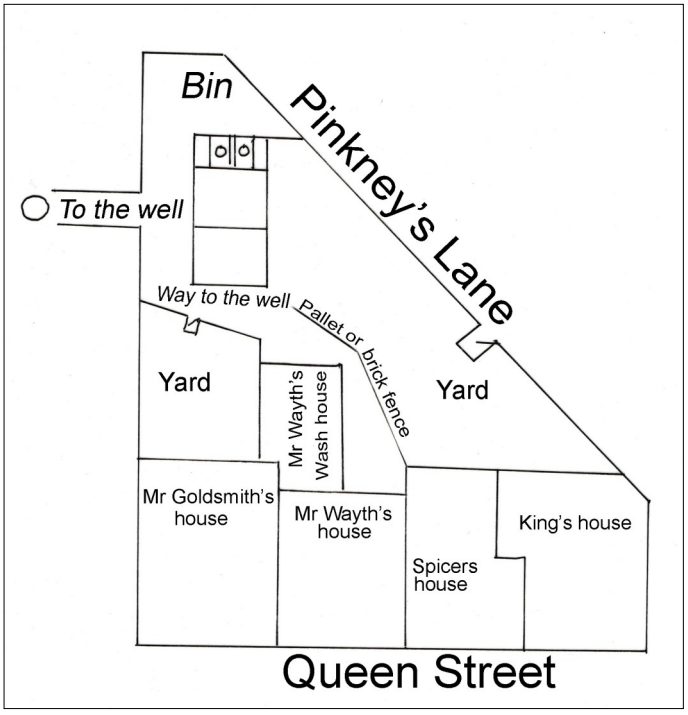
Double gravestone in St Edmund's churchyard for Samuel Cooper Wayth and his parents, Samuel and Jane

Two things I discovered early on were that nearly every first-born Wayth in history was christened either Samuel or Francis and that they were mostly merchants and mariners and staunchly non-conformist. The term 'merchant' is somewhat vague and may itself involve owning and/or sailing merchant ships. The key to Francis's unlikely wealth may have been his parents, Samuel and Mary who had a very nice house on South Green, described in the sale particulars as "A Genteel Modern-built Brick'd House" with a washhouse, pantry and stables, "a garden finely planted containing 32 rods of land" (about a quarter of an acre) and an adjacent 'tenement' which was leased.

At the time young Francis moved into Queen Street his dad had retired from a career as a merchant and, at 65 was enjoying a more leisurely intellectual life as a schoolmaster. His library was packed with books on divinity, mathematics, mechanics and philosophy as well as terrestrial globes and a working clockwork replica of the Southwold Jack.

His carpenter son Francis was the oldest of nine siblings and was evidently a much more wild and volatile character than his father. He had married a Mary Coleman some seven years before moving into Queen Street with their three young children, but he had certainly not settled down. Ten years on, in 1782, now aged 43 and still a carpenter, he was up before the town Bailiffs on charges of breaking into Thomas Pott's stable in "violent and aggravating circumstances" for which he pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 'Durance Vile' in gaol for six months and fined £30 (nearly £5000 in today's money, almost as much as he'd paid for his house) . He was also found guilty of being "a nuisance" in one of Southwold's streets which incurred a further fine of £10 with the condition that he stayed in gaol until it was paid. I can find no record of where he was incarcerated but the likelihood is that it was in Southwold's

'Southwold Street Names—a speculative history', Jenny Hursell, 2011



'Plan of Premises the property of the late Samuel Wayth deced' Redrawn copy of a sketch plan in a conveyance document dated 1841

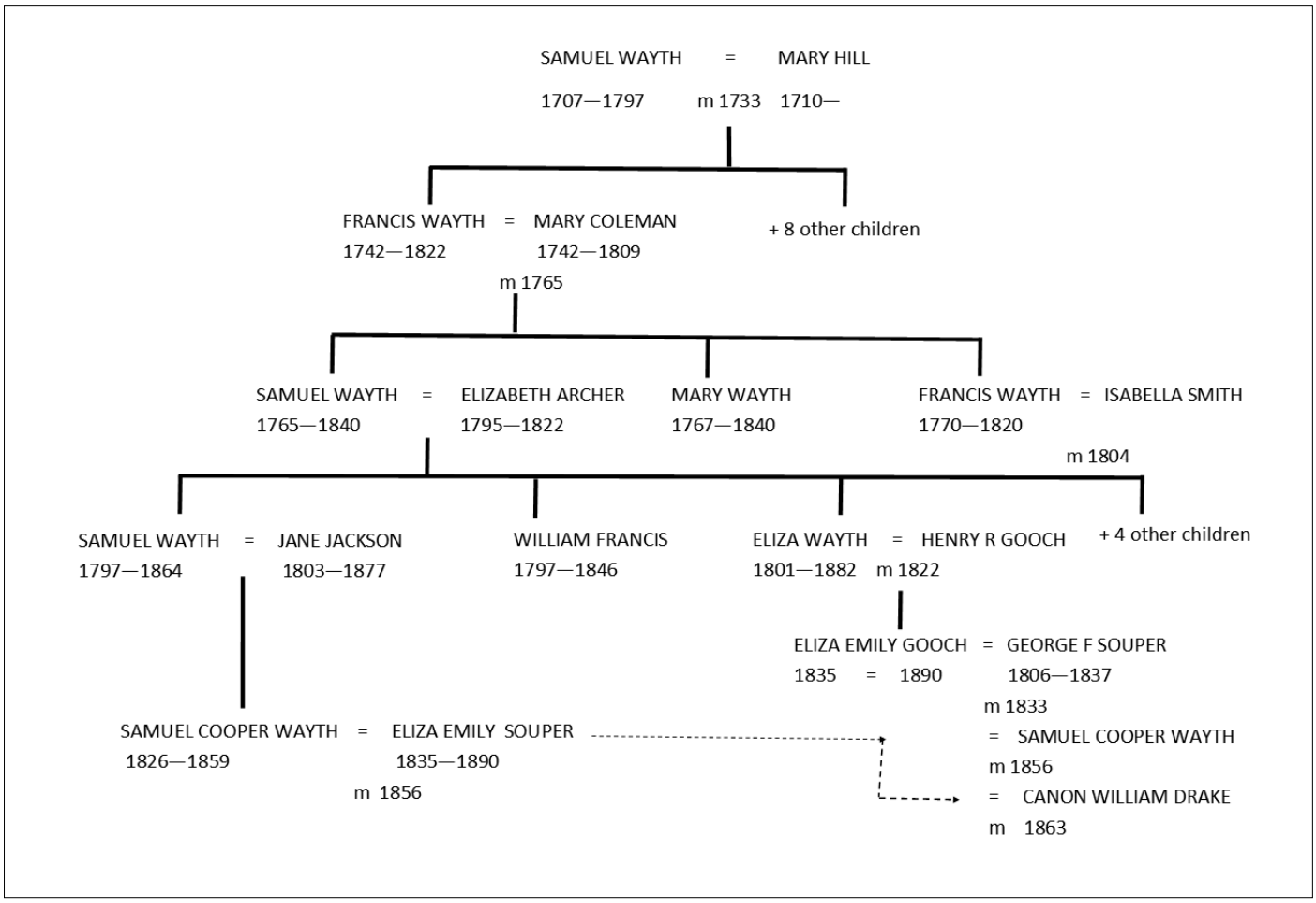
own notoriously porous gaol. Apparently he did manage to escape and if this was via the normal route over the rear wall into the town shambles, it would have been just one more leap into his own back yard. As to the fines, we can only speculate that Dad must have come to rescue.

But perhaps Francis learned his lesson because, in due course, he graduated from carpenter to timber merchant, mariner and finally 'Gentleman' who was elevated to the position of Town Bailiff himself. The mischievous and 'entitled' streak remained, however. One of his first acts after taking his seat as a Bailiff was to rip those pages out of the Town Book (Southwold's Hansard) that covered the record of his indictment, trial and imprisonment. Someone afterwards wrote in Latin on the following page a possibly ironic explanation of this vandalism: *si non erasset fureat ille minus* which translates very roughly as "If this record had not been destroyed his reputation would have been compromised". As part of the process of laundering his record Francis, now one of the Corporation's elected administrators of justice himself, arranged that the extortionate fines levied on him by his predecessors should now be reimbursed out of corporate coffers. One of his chief adversaries, Southwold's Collector of Customs, William Revans, wrote in 1806:

> *...we admit Mr Wayth have been chosen one of the Bailiffs of this Town but Truth oblige us to confess that we do not consider that choice to be in consequence of any respectability attached to him either from situation, circumstances, Abilities or Integrity of Character.**

The late 1700s and early 1800s were certainly not the proudest chapter of Southwold's civic history. Local historian, Thomas Gardner, wrote in 1754: "The Body Corporate ran warmly into Parties, whereby private interest became the principal end of every action, and public good became totally neglected." It was this widespread self-serving corruption in local and national governance that led

** Quoted by Rachel Lawrence in 'Southwold River—Georgian Life in the Blyth Valley'*



eventually to The Great Reform Act of 1832 when Southwold Corporation had to ditch the Medieval Bailiff model and become a mayorality.

To his sons, Francis must have been far from the ideal male role model. Little wonder that Samuel and Francis Junior, proved to be chips off the old block. At any rate, in 1817, they certainly colluded with their reprobate father in a fraudulent trick which he played on the Fen Reeves, the official guardians of the Common. Francis senior had a small herd of three cows which he kept on the common. As a way of subsidising the town's poor, the rules of pasturage laid down that the charge for one cow was just five shillings per year. For two cows it was £1 per cow per year. For three it was £3 per cow. Any more cattle than that attracted the top rate of £5 per cow. Francis Senior had no intention of forking out £9 per year so he registered two of his cows in the names of his two sons so that each cow would attract the lowest rate. The Fen Reeves took a dim view of this and confiscated the two extra cows and impounded them. Francis junior proceeded to sue the Reeves in an action known in legal parlance as 'replevin', demanding return of the cow, claiming that although his father owned her he hired her from him for two guineas a year. The jury were not convinced and had no hesitation in finding for the Reeves. Francis' brother Samuel, who had brought a similar action, promptly withdrew it. The fate of the two impounded cows is not recorded! Francis Junior and his Newcastle-born wife, Isabella, had six children but Francis died only three years after the cow incident at the age of 50. Isabella outlived him and ran a successful business, renting out several lodging houses.

Francis Senior died at the age of 80 in 1822 and it was his elder son, Samuel, who appears to have inherited the bulk of his wealth, Francis jnr having pre-deceased him.

Samuel continued to live at the Queen Street address until his death in 1840 at the age of 70. His wife, Elizabeth, nee Archer, had died 18 years before and the property, plus other properties in the town, were left jointly to his six surviving children. It was valued at £265. In a subsequent conveyance, the five younger siblings agreed to sell their shares to the oldest, Samuel junior, for a concessionary discount of five sixths of the valuation, namely £220-16s-8d. It's at this point that it becomes clear from the documents just how extensive the property in Queen Street was (see plan on previous page). It consisted of four large houses, three of which had been leased or 'mortgaged' to Mr Goldsmith, Mr Spicer and Mr King while the Wayths lived in the fourth. In total, the freehold appears to occupy most of the East side of Queen Street and extend to the rear more than half way down Pinkneys Lane. There is a plan showing the site in 1841 with all its 'Messuages, Tenements, Hereditaments, Premises and Appurtenances'. Most of the site was taken up by a communal yard which had a separate entrance in Pinkney's Lane. The Wayths had their own fenced-off portion of the yard containing a large wash house. Mr Goldsmith also had his own allocated mini-yard but no wash house. At the rear-most corner of the yard were a communal toilet block and what the sketch plan calls a 'bin' but which is referred to in the deeds more graphically as a 'muck heap'. There was no water on the site at all but a right -of-way passage led to a draw-well whose use and upkeep was shared with a neighbour.

Samuel Jnr, the firstborn son of the deceased and himself a Master Mariner, now owned the Queen Street estate outright but no longer lived there. Four years previously he had bought, for £124, the Non-Conformist Chapel in Meeting House Lane, (later renamed Lorne Road). The chapel had become redundant and Samuel demolished it to make way for a house which became a home for him and his wife, Jane (nee Jackson). They owned several other properties in Lorne Road which Jane managed as lodging houses. The couple had two sons: the younger, William Echline Wayth, became a Trinity House Pilot based in Lowestoft while the elder, Samuel Cooper Wayth, joined the Royal Navy and earned his Master's Certificate. He married his 21-year-old, widowed first cousin, Eliza Emily Souper in 1856 and, after three years, most of which he must have spent on active service in the RN China Station, he perished aboard the gunship *HMS Surprise*. Twice-widowed Eliza Emily must have been distraught. However, she was still only 24 and she did remarry – Canon William Drake, the Rector of Sedgebrook in Northamptonshire – with whom she had 4 boys.

Having finally made the connection with that double stone in St Edmund's graveyard, I had also discovered a mysterious inconsistency on Samuel Cooper Wayth's father's half of the memorial. This gives his death as 29th June 1862, aged 67 which would put his birth at 1795, whereas it is actually 1797. An appended note on a handwritten copy of his will states that he died on 15 July 1864. The register of his death confirms that the latter is correct. I surmise that the double gravestone was erected some time after Samuel's death and that the inscription relied partly on someone's flawed memory.

In 1864, on her husband's death, Samuel's widow, Jane inherited the freehold of the entire Queen Street site, now occupied by various tenants. However, it seems that Jane had also inherited debts. Her husband had evidently taken out loans from a wealthy land-owning Halesworth family, the Crabtrees, putting up the Queen Street properties as collateral. In 1873 the two surviving Crabtree sisters demanded repayment which resulted in Jane relinquishing the freehold to them after 101 years in the family. Jane Wayth died in 1877.

The houses on Queen Street were largely rebuilt one by one in different styles in the latter half of the 19th century.

Subsequent occupants of no 18, which at one time became named 'Durban House', have included the two Debney brothers, Henry J and Edward O, who ran the large department store on South Green, now 'The Homestead', The International Tea Company Stores Ltd, Christopher Rowan Robinson's sports shop, 'Pinkneys', afterwards taken over by Ann Lawson who also added toys and gifts to the range and, finally, in the year 2000, the Patels with the Queen Street Pharmacy.

B Tolfree 2019

Sources: Original deeds, wills etc loaned to me by the Patels of 18 Queen Street; 'The Southwold Diary of James Maggs 1818-1876, edited by Alan Bottomley; 'Southwold River—Georgian Life in the Blyth Valley' by Rachel Lawrence; 'Southwold Street Names—A speculative history' by Jenny Hursell; Ipswich Journal, 5 August 1771, 4 February 1797 and 13 April 1782; Bury & Norwich Post, April 2 1817 (all via British Newspaper Archive); census returns, birth, marriage and death records (all via ancestry.co.uk)

Reading Gardner's History

by Simon Loftus

> THE Study of *Antiquity* being generally agreeable to the Disposition of many ingenious People, I have presumed to publish this small Tract of some Places, especially the once famous CITY of DUNWICH, which will afford Speculation sufficient to ruminate on the Vicissitude, and Instability of sublunary Things.

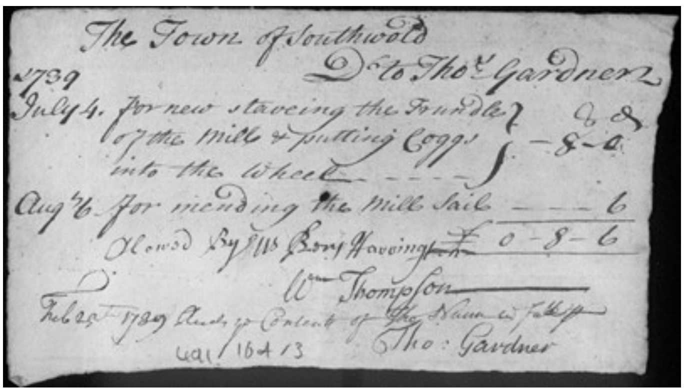
That wonderful sentence, reminiscent of the seventeenth century Norfolk polymath Sir Thomas Browne, opens the Preface to Thomas Gardner's *Historical Account of Dunwich, Blithburgh, Southwold*, published in 1754. This masterpiece of local history quotes from numerous documents that have long since vanished and explores byways of social history that are recorded nowhere else. It prompts the 'Speculation' that Gardner loved.

I speculate, first of all, on Gardner himself. Who was this extraordinary man?

Born in 1690, he first appears in the records in 1729, when he was appointed Town Constable. The municipal offices followed in swift succession - Deputy Controller of the Port of Southwold, Sergeant at Arms, Fen Reeve, Member of the Assembly, Inspector of the Work-House and Salt Tax Officer. In 1756 he was elected Churchwarden and the following year was one of the Bailiffs of Southwold. Two years later he was appointed Chamberlain, responsible for keeping the town accounts. So this was a capable and highly respected man, trusted by his fellow townsmen, or at least by those who controlled the affairs of Borough.

Gardner was also a down-to earth person, with fingers in many pies, as was typical of the time. Described as a 'joiner' for much of his life, he supplied building materials for the Church, repaired the town windmill (account below) and seems to have acted in some respects as an undertaker. On several occasions there were payments to Gardner for making coffins and to his second wife Molly for making shifts - probably shrouds. Like most who could afford it, he also owned a share in a boat – the sloop 'John & Sarah'.

These glimpses suggest a practical man, perhaps the equivalent of a local builder, but there was another side to him, the scholar and historian. In 1745, he exhibited 'A true and exact plate, containing the boundaries of the town of



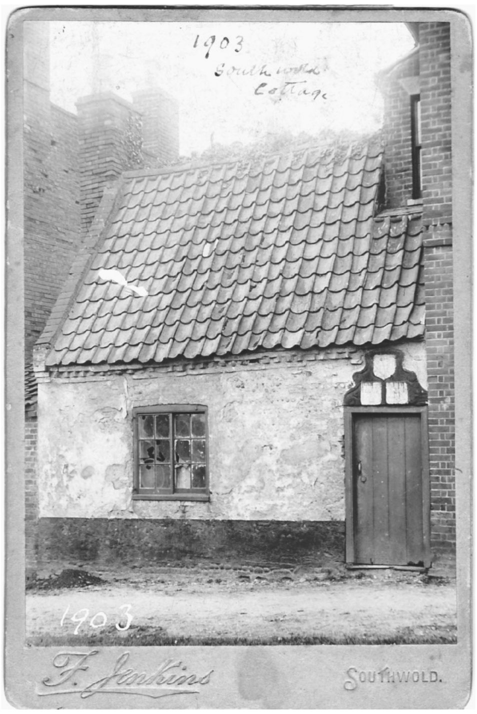
The Town of Southwold
Dr to Thos Gardner
1739
July 4. For new staveing the Foundle of the Mill & putting Coggs into the Wheel — 8 - 0
Aug 6. For mending the Mill Sail — 6
Alowed By us Benj Haveing £ 0 - 8 - 6
Wm Thompson
Feb 25th 1739 Recd ye Content of the [illegible]
Tho: Gardner
441/1641 3

Dunwich, and the entries of certain records and evidences' at the Society of Antiquaries in London. This was the first public evidence of what became his consuming passion – a history of his town and locality.

It must have been about this time that Gardner was appointed the Salt Tax Officer. It was a position of some importance when the tax on salt was a significant stream of government revenue, and it demanded rigorous integrity. Salt destined for the fishing fleet was exempt from the tax, so Gardner needed a watchful eye to ensure that John May, owner of the Southwold salt works, wasn't fiddling his books and selling tax-free salt for domestic use.

The Salt Tax office was in a building on South Green -

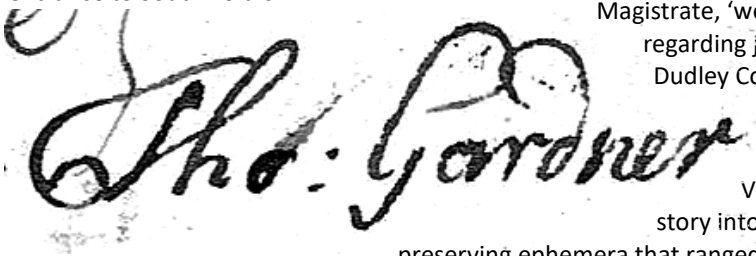
originally constructed as a small hospital for sick and wounded seamen, in the aftermath of the Battle of Sole Bay. A drawing by Hamlet Watling, dated 1848 (above) depicts the building as it originally appeared, and a photo of 1903 (right) shows the truncated remnant, shortly before it was demolished and the 17th century



coats of arms were incorporated in its replacement, The Cottage.

Gardner's role became increasingly important after 1750, when Southwold was chosen as the headquarters of the Free British Fishery, established by Act of Parliament. The object was to revive the nation's fishing industry and compete with the Dutch, our long-standing rivals for dominance of the European herring markets. £500,000 was voted for the endeavour, equivalent to almost £100 million in modern money.

Wharves and warehouses, a net house, tan office, cooper's workshop and a row of cottages in Church Street were built for this new venture, and the entrance to Southwold's harbour was improved by the completion of two piers. Fifty large busses (broad-beamed herring boats) were constructed and fitted out, and the Salt Works vastly increased its production.



We can guess that the increased responsibilities of his role may have allowed Gardner to employ a clerk to undertake much of the work, leaving him time to pursue his researches as an historian, because the project that he had embarked on required an extraordinary amount of research - transcribing and summarising documents, examining buildings and ruins for traces of their past, collecting coins and curiosities and fossils, many of which he engraved as illustrations. It was a stupendous labour and Gardner was duly grateful to those who had made it possible.

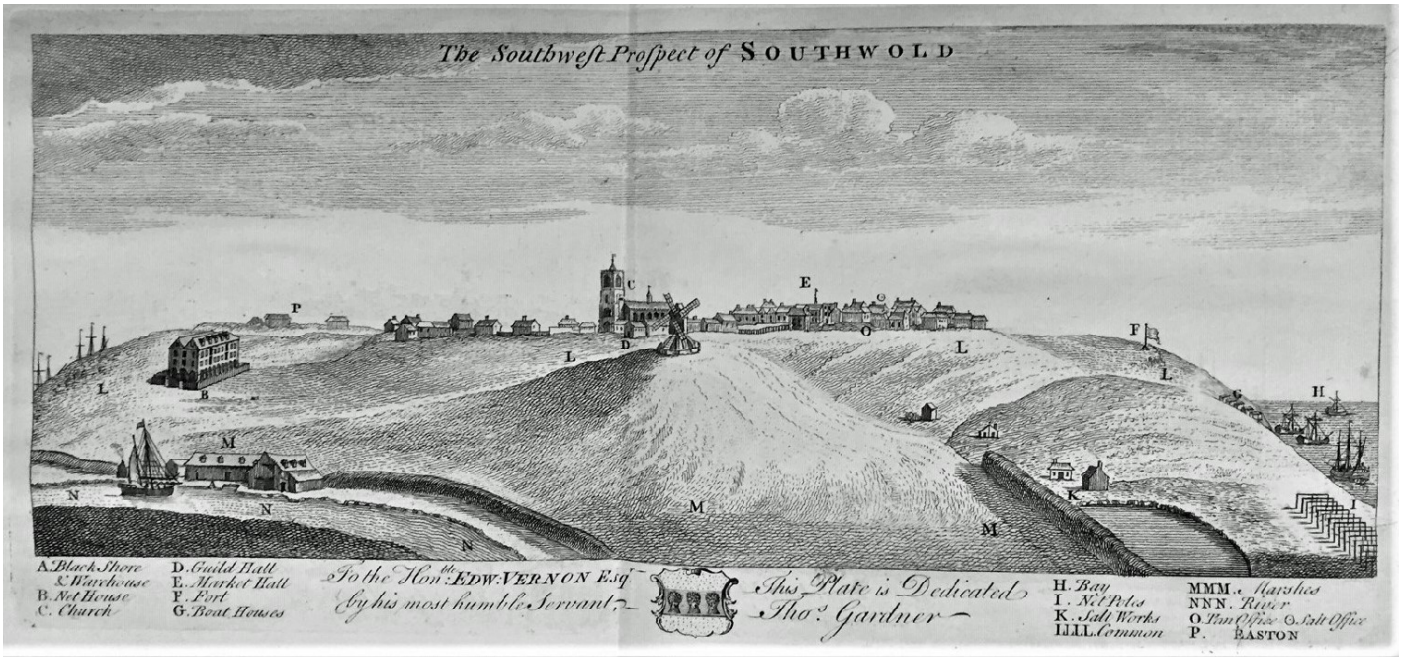
He published his masterpiece in 1754 and dedicated it to the Harbour Commissioners. It was financed by a long list of subscribers, headed by the 'His late Highness, Frederick Prince of Wales' - the first Governor of the Free British Fishery. Gardner's engraving of 'The Southwest Prospect of Southwold', which accompanied his history, showed all the new developments that the Fishery had brought to the town.

The book itself is elegantly printed (with occasionally erratic pagination) but it is clear that Gardner expected his readers to make notes in it, amplifying the text, because blank pages were bound in at frequent intervals, right from the start. In my own copy, those pages remain empty, as published, but in each of the four copies owned by Southwold Museum they have been annotated by later owners with additional information and two of these copies have been rebound, with numerous extra leaves inserted, together with engraved illustrations, printed handbills and other ephemera. The result is a fascinating resource for local historians.

Perhaps our most interesting copy is that which was formerly owned by Francis Henry Vertue (1822 – 1894) and Dudley Collings (1870–1955), both of whom were Southwold surgeons and antiquaries. Vertue was also a Borough Magistrate, 'well known for his convictions regarding justice and right', and Dudley Collings was the founding Curator of Southwold Museum.

Vertue extended Gardner's story into the 19th century, preserving ephemera that ranged from fierce polemics surrounding the reform of the Borough in 1835 to a newspaper cutting from March 1890, recording the death at ninety-three of the diarist James Maggs – and a bill for some bacon that Maggs bought a few years before his death. Maggs's *Southwold Diaries* (subsequently published by the Suffolk Records Society) are among our greatest treasures, but his own copy of Gardner's *History* (with 'numerous manuscript additions and annotations' and 'additional printed and manuscript tracts bound in') escaped our grasp. It came up for auction twenty years ago and fetched four times the high estimate. I should love to know where it can now be found.

As you can see, Gardner's own habit of digressions has rubbed off onto me as I write this article, but at the back of my mind, all the time, is the mystery of the man himself, a question that remains unanswered. We know that he lived in a house in Park Lane, we know that he worked in the Salt Tax office on South Green, and we know that he died at the age of 79, on 30 March 1769, and was buried in Southwold churchyard between his two wives, Rachel and Mary. *Betwixt honour and virtue here doth lie, The remains of old antiquity.*

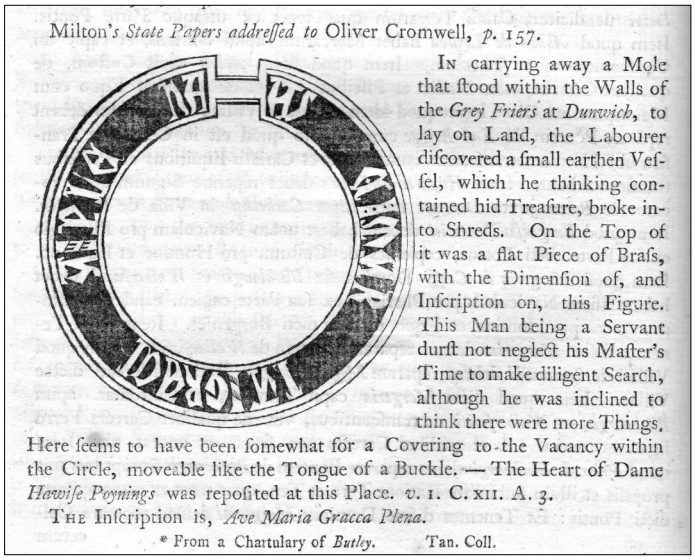


But that beautiful phrase which I quoted at the beginning – that his book 'will inform Speculation sufficient to ruminate on the Vicissitude, and Instability of sublunary things' – continues to haunt me. Who was this man - on the one hand so practical and competent, on the other so buried in dusty documents and past history - yet capable of writing those words - words which seem to echo Thomas Browne and anticipate W G Sebald?

That sense of a thread through time is embodied in the tale of a strange discovery, reported by Milton to Oliver Cromwell, with which Gardner ends his account of Dunwich. 'Within the walls of the *Grey Friars* at *Dunwich*, a Labourer discovered a small earthen Vessel, which he thinking contained Treasure, broke into Shreds. On the Top of it was a flat Piece of Brass, with the dimension of and Inscription on this Figure.' The 'figure' is an engraving by Gardner of a medieval ring brooch, with an undecipherable inscription on one side and, on the other, the words *Ave Maria Gracia Plena* (Hail Mary full of Grace). And he adds an intriguing note, without explanation, that 'The heart of Dame *Hawise Poynings* was reposited at this Place.'

It reads like a mystery, a brief glimpse of an unrecoverable past, but in 2004 this same bronze brooch reappeared at auction, together with a copy of Gardner's History. It had been handed down from one Suffolk antiquary to another, lovingly cherished, until it was sold for £3,000.

Simon Loftus, 2020



Milton's *State Papers addreſſed to* Oliver Cromwell, *p.* 157.

In carrying away a Mole that ſtood within the Walls of the *Grey Friers* at *Dunwich*, to lay on Land, the Labourer diſcovered a ſmall earthen Veſſel, which he thinking contained hid Treaſure, broke into Shreds. On the Top of it was a flat Piece of Braſs, with the Dimenſion of, and Inſcription on, this Figure. This Man being a Servant durſt not neglect his Maſter's Time to make diligent Search, although he was inclined to think there were more Things.

Here ſeems to have been ſomewhat for a Covering to the Vacancy within the Circle, moveable like the Tongue of a Buckle. — The Heart of Dame *Hawiſe Poynings* was repoſited at this Place. *v.* 1. C. XII. A. 3.

The Inſcription is, *Ave Maria Gracca Plena.*

* From a Chartulary of *Butley*. Tan. Coll.

Wine gums, ice-cream cornets and Park Drive tipped:

Post-war shopkeeping in Southwold by Dianne Lawrence

This article is part of a larger project on the history of the shop and its proprietors and Dianne would be delighted to hear from any readers who have memories to share - lawrencedianne@hotmail.com

In 1924 Ernest Palmer opened a sweet and tobacconist shop at 2 East Street. Two years later he married local woman Audrey Smith, and from then on the couple ran the business together, until Mr Palmer's death in 1979. Thereafter Mrs Palmer was the shop's sole proprietor, until thirteen years later, in April 1992, when the business closed. Thus for nigh on 66 years the Palmers' shop was a significant feature of Southwold town centre. It follows that there are many stories to be told about this long-running business and its industrious owners. Here the focus is on the impact World War Two had on the couple and their lives and how, after the war, they went about re-stocking the shop and re-establishing their livelihood.

On 2nd July 1940 the inhabitants of Southwold received notification from the Regional Civil Defence Committee that, owing to the risk of enemy action, they were to evacuate the town. The majority of the townsfolk left, reducing the population from approximately 3000 to less than 800. Among those to leave their home were Audrey and Ernest Palmer and their two young sons, then aged four and eight. Mothers with young children were one of the categories of the population instructed to leave, but even without this directive it is hard to imagine that Mr and Mrs Palmer could have remained in Southwold for the duration of the war, for supplies of the goods they sold were to become severely limited.

Mrs Palmer photographed in her shop in the 1980s by Stephen Wolfenden for his book 'To the Town', the first of three volumes chronicling the people of Southwold. ©Stephen Wolfenden.

Shortage of supplies

Although sweets were not actually rationed until July 1942, at which point the allowance was set at 12 ounces per person for a period of four weeks, this was in marked contrast to the average consumption just before the outbreak of war of 6.5 ounces per person per week[1]. Even prior to the implementation of rationing the government introduced a system of 'zoning' which aimed to ensure that limited resources were distributed fairly and efficiently and, in consequence, in many areas some sorts of confectionery ceased to be available during the war,

and countrywide deliveries of most products were few and far between.

A comparable situation developed for supplies of tobacco. Although tobacco was never rationed the focus was on maintaining supplies for those in the military, or civilians engaged in work for the war effort. At the start of the war a Tobacco Controller was appointed whose brief was to oversee the fair distribution of cigarettes and tobacco. Some lines of cigarettes ceased production altogether, all deliveries were restricted, and as the duty on tobacco was increased from 11s-6d per pound to 21s-6d that too had an impact on sales.[2] With supplies of goods so constrained, limited fuel available, and the numbers of potential customers so radically reduced the Palmers surely had little choice but to empty the shop shelves and board up the premises.

Back to business

It was to be more than four years before the Palmer family returned to their home and accustomed lives. The intervening years were spent in Abingdon, Oxfordshire where Ernest Palmer worked on aircraft and tanks in one of the Nuffield factories.[3] To date it is not known whether Audrey worked beyond the home during that period, and it seems likely that she was fully occupied in caring for her family thrust into such unfamiliar circumstances and surroundings.

Whilst the family were away Southwold suffered a deal of damage and heartache as a result of enemy action. 13 civilians were killed and 49 injured. 77 properties were destroyed and 2,299 incurred damage – including the Palmer's shop. 2,689 incendiary devices were dropped and on 2,046 occasions the air raid warning sirens wailed through the little town.[4] The impact on the community must have been dreadful and, although the Palmers were at a safe distance, any news they received from home was doubtless deeply distressing.

The indications are that the Palmers returned to Suffolk at the close of 1944, as Ernest Palmer's bank statement for December of that year records that he transferred his funds from the Oxford branch back to Southwold, suggesting that they re-opened the shop shortly after that date. Another document to have survived is a hire agreement with covering letter from Wall's Ice-Cream, dated 7th February 1945, confirming the re-installation of the freezer. Thereafter Palmer's bank statement records a weekly payment to Wall's of £3-2s-4d. From early 1945 onwards regular transactions are recorded with tobacco companies Wills, Carreras and Players, and with confectionery manufacturers Needlers and Rowntree. Wholesalers listed include Austin, Harvey and Taylor. Presumably the latter is R.M. Taylor & Son Ltd, Great Yarmouth, with whom the Palmers were to conduct business for

Ernest and Audrey Palmer on their Golden Wedding day, 1978. With grateful thanks to the Suffolk Record Office and the Lowestoft Journal for their permission to use this image.

decades to come, indeed some of Mrs Palmer's final transactions were with Taylor's, just prior to her closure of the shop.[5]

The longevity of Palmer's Confectionery and Tobacconists tells us that they were successful shopkeepers, but their achievements were not easily come by. Post-war resumption of sweet and tobacco supplies was uneven. Sweets didn't come off-ration until 1949, and even then were back on again after four months, although admittedly the allowance was raised to 5 ounces per person per week. Sweet rationing did not end completely until September 1953. Also affecting Palmer's sales were the limited supplies of ice-cream. Ice-cream sales didn't improve nationally until the 1950s, and even then milk shortages made cheap ice-lollies a more attractive option for many customers.[6] None of the orders which Palmers placed immediately after the war have survived, but it's reasonable to assume that slowly but steadily their shelves were re-stocked with such contemporary children's favourites as Sherbet Fountains, Razzle Dazzle, Chewing Gum Balls and sweet cigarettes. More adult tastes were once more able to ponder the relative merits of chocolate eclairs against Murray Mints, whilst for special treats there was the gaily wrapped Quality Street or the darkly luxurious Black Magic. So by the early 1950s Mr and Mrs Palmer were once more able to offer their customers a rich variety of confectionery, but it did not happen overnight.

Tobacco Tax

The re-supplying of shops with tobacco products happened rather more rapidly, for the base reason that the government saw it as a vote winner, and that they wanted the revenue from the taxation payable on all tobacco products. We know that in April 1945 Palmer paid £26-16s-4d for goods from Wills, £25-11s-3d from Carreras and £63-11s-10d from Players. In 1947 the government imposed a colossal increase on tobacco tax, from 35s-6d on a pound to 54s-10d, prompting a dip in consumption. None the less as large numbers of people smoked – indeed it is estimated that in 1949 there were 21 million smokers in Britain, 13.5 million men and 7.5 million women – and as most consumers responded to the price increases by switching to a cheaper brand, rather than by giving up, the Palmers could be reasonably confident that sales would pick up. Down-turns in tobacco sales were overcome by stocking a range of brands suited to all pockets and tastes, including those targeted at women smokers. So it can be seen that Palmers' relatively specialist trade was re-established, though it wasn't without its challenges and did take a little time.

Audrey and Ernest worked astonishingly hard. As Mr Palmer explained in the interview he and Audrey gave on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary, by which time the shop had been trading for 52 years, they opened seven days a week, from 7.30 a.m. – 9.00 p.m., 364 days a year, only closing on Christmas Day.[7] Furthermore, six days a week Ernest cycled to the Blythburgh & District Hospital to serve patients and staff with cigarettes, sweets and tobacco, an enterprise started after the war and continuing for 17 years. We know that Audrey did much, perhaps most, of the day-to-day running of the shop. The hospital-based trade must have added significantly to the daily work load, for not only was Mr Palmer absent from the shop for several hours per day, but supplies of the stock for the hospital run had to be recorded and replenished as needed, and cash received duly noted and incorporated into the shop's takings. All this work had to be carried out as well as the constant multiple tasks involved in running the shop – serving customers, placing orders, receiving goods and dealing with sales reps'. Audrey and Ernest's success as shopkeepers was certainly hard won.

Community Service

We learn more about Mr and Mrs Palmer and their place in the community if we look at their lives beyond the shop. Ernest served on the Southwold Council for 18 ½ years, and as a school governor for 12. As a young man, Palmer played for all three of the local football teams, subsequently refereeing for a further 15 years. Ernest emerges as a man of energy, with a wide range of interests and a prodigious zeal for serving his community. Mrs Palmer had a quieter but no less committed approach to supporting the town. In 1954 she and her husband were founders members of the Silver Thread Club, and Audrey became Secretary and Treasurer, continuing to serve in that capacity until the late 1980s. In January 1988 Mrs Palmer received civic acknowledgement of her efforts and achievements when the Town Mayor presented her with an award, declaring it was for one 'Who is Southwold, loves Southwold and works for Southwold'.[8]

The re-opening of Palmer's shop, which prior to the war was already a well-established concern, run by members of long-established local families, must have been one of the markers of a longed-for return to normality following the seemingly interminable years of the war.[9] For their customers, and arguably for other townsfolk, Palmer's shop represented much that was cosy and domestic, much indeed that was Home.

Of course the little shop on East Street did face competition, for at no point was it the only local retail outlet for sweets and tobacco.[10] Nonetheless the Palmer's business not only survived but prospered. Plainly the shop and its proprietors were appreciated by their loyal customers for the service they provided: for the convenience of being 'just down the street', for the familiarity of the shop's interior, for the pleasure of being recognised by a shopkeeper who knew that you'd just popped in for a packet of 'your usual', and what that 'usual' was . A picture emerges of an enterprise which had value and meaning for its proprietors, for their customers, and for the community of Southwold.

[1] N. Whittaker, Sweet talk: the secret history of confectionery, (London, Gollancz, 1998), p.105.
[2] B.W.E. Alford, W.H. & H.O. Wills and the development of the tobacco industry, 1786-1965, (London, Methuen & Co Ltd, 1973), p.399.
[3] Interview, Ernest Palmer, 'Lowestoft Journal', 10th February 1978, Suffolk Record Office, henceforth SRO, 1176/2/1/16/90.
[4] Becker M.J. (Ed.), Story of Southwold, J.S. Hurst 'Southwold in Two World Wars', (Southwold, F. Jenkins, 1948), pp. 132-139.
[5] Unless otherwise stated documents referenced are in a private collection.
[6] Whittaker, Sweet Talk, p.118.
[7] 'Lowestoft Journal', 1978.
[8] 'Lowestoft Journal', 29th January, 1988, SRO, 1176/2/1/16/24.
[9] Audrey Palmer, nee Smith was a member of the Smith family, who had a long-running bathing machine business, and Ernest's father and grandfather were both Harbour Masters.
[10] Examples of other local shops dealing in the same goods: during the 1950s F.C.Barber, 1 St James Green stocked sweet and tobacco, fruit and vegetables, and Mrs Mary Buckler, 37 High Street was a newsagent and confectioner. By the 1960s there was a branch of the Gateway supermarket in the town which would certainly have stocked both sweets and tobacco. Southwold Museum, 'Southwold & Son', https://www.southwoldmuseum.org/thetown.htm,

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