

SHORTER NOTICES

LITTLE HOCKHAM

by Alan Davison, M.A., F.S.A.Scot.

Little Hockham was listed as a deserted medieval village in 1955.¹ It lies on the gentle south-facing slope of a shallow valley which is drained in an easterly direction by a small nameless tributary of the Thet. An even smaller tributary stream served, in part, as a boundary with the parish of Great Hockham. Little Hockham, still recognised to some extent as a separate entity in the 19th century, has been incorporated, with Great Hockham, in the civil parish of Hockham. The inhabitants have worshipped at Great Hockham church since, it appears, medieval times at least.

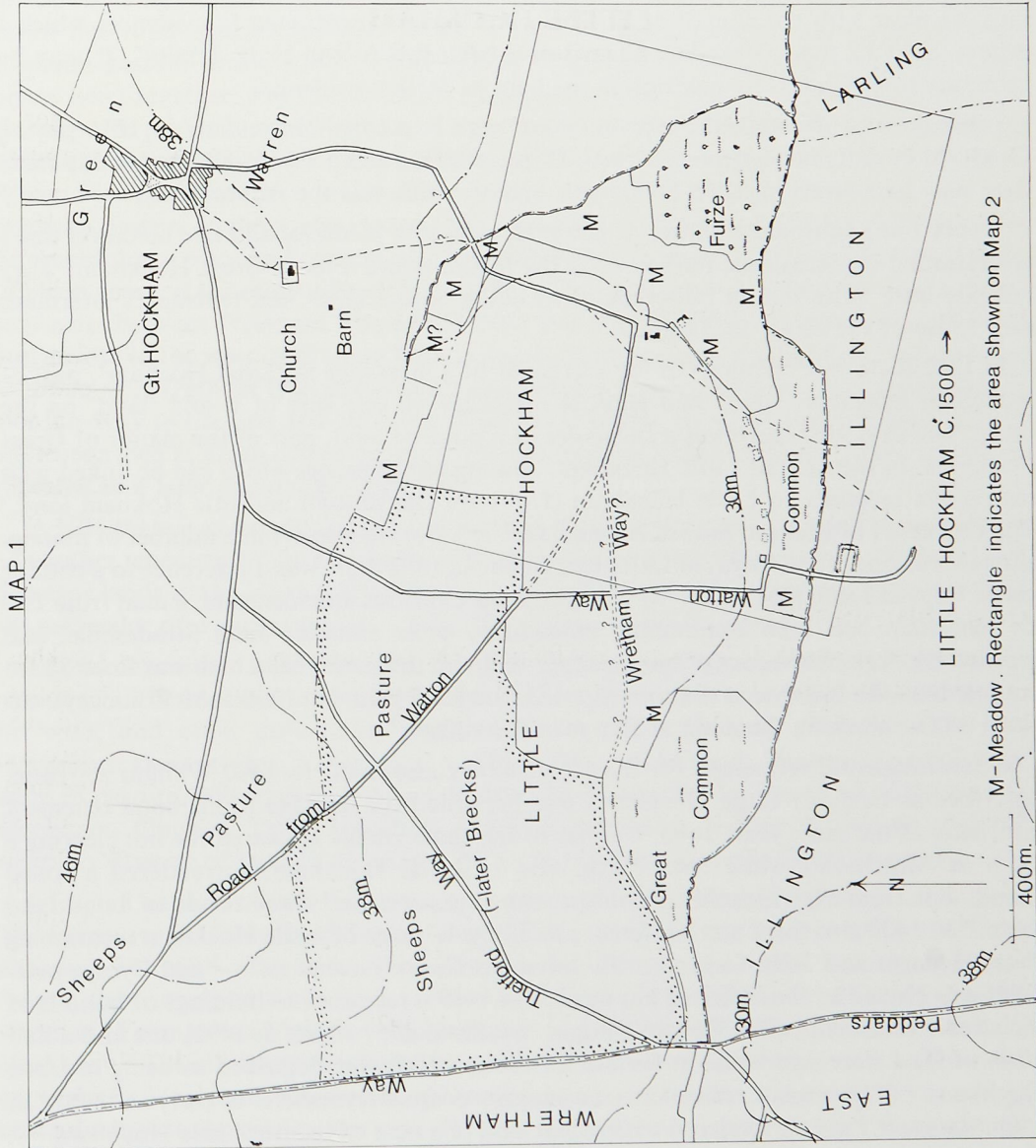
Apart from a few buildings in Stonebridge, to all intents part of East Wretham, the only ones remaining in Little Hockham are at Little Hockham Hall Farm. This stands on the 30m (100ft) contour and is now surrounded, apart from one small pasture, by arable land. On the north-facing slope of the valley, opposite Little Hockham, is the much shrunken village of Illington to which it is linked by a footpath and a rather rough track. The lane to Great Hockham is the only surfaced road linking the Hall Farm with the outside world.

Documentary History

The evidence available is, sadly, very limited. The only appearance of Little Hockham in a national record is, it seems, its entry in the Domesday Book among the lands of Roger Bigod. Ailwin held half a ploughland in 'Parva Hocham';² there were in 1066 and 1086 three villeins, three bordars and two serfs. There were three acres of meadow. There was in 1086, as in 1066, one plough on the demesne and half a plough belonging to the men. There was one sokeman who had three and a half acres. It was valued in 1086 at thirteen shillings and four pence; the same valuation as for 1066. It was thus a tiny place having the lowest valuation of the twenty-two vills for which such amounts were given in the Hundred of Shropham. Its recorded population was such that it was twenty-second out of twenty-five places in the hundred, only Essebei (Ashby in Snetterton), Snetterton itself and 'Baconstorp' having smaller numbers.

It was not mentioned in 1254, 1291,³ 1316,⁴ 1334,⁵ 1428⁴ or 1449:⁵ presumably it was so small that it was included with some neighbour, almost certainly Great Hockham.

Much of the information about Little Hockham so far available has been provided by Blomefield;⁶ it is rather scanty. Soon after 1252 it belonged to William of Hockham who unified it by joining with it all the parts of the two Hockhams which belonged to the manor of East Wretham. Blomefield had seen a Register of the Abbey of Bec to which the manor of East Wretham with its members in Hockham and Shropham belonged. Details of the economies of East Wretham and other Bec manors have been published.⁷ According to Blomefield, William of Hockham, in 1299, levied a fine of the whole when it comprised eighteen messuages, 275 acres of land, eleven acres of pasture, one acre of turfland,



37 acres of heath and 14s of rent in Great and Little Hockham; however, there is no indication as to how much of this was actually within Little Hockham.

Blomefield thought that Roger Bigod had given the advowson to the Cluniac Priory of Thetford. He could find no institutions to a church in Little Hockham and assumed that this was because it had been joined by means of this gift to Great Hockham. However, he considered that a church might have existed there until after the time of Richard II, 'for then we meet with the church of St. Mary at Hocham mentioned in evidences which I believe must be this, Great Hockham being dedicated to the Holy Trinity'. It may be necessary to weigh this assumption in the light of further evidence.

Subsequently, Blomefield observes, there were five copyhold tenants in 1616 paying £3-12s-0d in rent, two tenements worth £8 per annum, and a sheepwalk. In his day there were only two farms in Little Hockham, one of which was the manor house.

A very few additional glimpses of Little Hockham in medieval and late medieval times are afforded by occasional references in the manor court rolls of Great Hockham. They indicate little more than a rather shadowy entity whose lands and tenements intermesh with those of the larger settlement.

In 1367 there was mention⁸ of the surrender of a messuage in 'Lytel Hocham', part of Hudeman tenement, which had another messuage on one side of it and 'land' on the other. The next year there was a surrender of a piece of land, part of the manor of Great Hockham, in the field of Little Hockham. Among minor names which can be linked with reasonable certainty to Little Hockham (1397) are Davyeslond and litle Hokham lond.⁹ The first court of Richard Earl of Arundel (1391)⁹ refers to tenants in a number of manors and records one, John Payn, in Little Hockham. In 1392 there was a reference to a cottage called Pays in Little Hockham.⁹ In 1393 there were various ameracements: a man from Little Hockham had been commoning unlawfully, while another, John Stradeshille, had blocked the drain at the foot of his messuage there. In the same year a man was fined 3d for cutting down six 'wilwys' in the common of Little Hockham.⁹ In 1396 John Fraunceys was fined 3d for blocking the drain at Bottys in the village.⁹

A few incidental references for the 15th century also exist. In 1400 William at Hirne, described as being of Little Hockham, was presented for damage to his bond tenement and, later in the same year, John Webster of the same village appeared for not clearing a ditch at Alderman's while John Payn, also of Little Hockham, surrendered a soiled (bond, but formerly freehold) messuage with five acres and three roods of bond land there.¹⁰ In 1400 also there was a reference to all the homage of Little Hockham mentioning Peter Henerys and John Cosyn — 'Et Johannes Cosyn juratus est' — and Pyesye tenement was elected to the office of hayward.¹⁰ In 1499 a reference to holdings of bond land included a tenement called Davyes lying in 'lytylhokham', while, in 1492, one and a half acres of land were said to lie in Redmere furlong which was described as being in Little Hockham.¹¹ (There was a reference to an enclosure 'apud Rydemere' as early as 1398).⁹ In 1508 Margaret Pery surrendered a messuage and one acre of land in Little Hockham.¹¹

As the rolls of the manor of Great Hockham necessarily dealt mainly with matters in the major settlement the few references to Little Hockham are likely to mean that there was more activity there than is outwardly apparent.

From post-medieval times there is evidence of some continued occupation. Scattered references exist for some years up to 1644.¹² In 1559 John Allman died seised of a tenement in Little Hockham with a hempland of about one rood adjacent and an acre of land

to the south, part of the same tenement, newly built upon, with land now part of the demesne to the north, and a pightle of about one acre abutting south upon Little Hockham Common.

In 1628 Frances, wife of Borage Martin, died seised of a messuage newly built with an acre of land abutting on the common of Little Hockham to the south. This messuage was divided by a way at the southern end. She held another tenement with a little hempland of about one rood lying to the west of the newly built-upon piece and abutting upon the common pasture to the south. These appear to be part of a block of crofts and other pieces lying together. Frances also held a messuage called Rigdens with 40 acres lying in six separate pieces in the Infield of Little Hockham and 20 acres of land distributed variously elsewhere in Little Hockham. Rigdens had yards, orchards and gardens with a fifteen acre croft next to it and had a common way called Watton Way to the west and common pasture to the south. Among the various lands Frances had were three acres on Thornebushe, a piece of four and a half acres which had Watton Way to the east, a piece of seven acres on the other side of Watton Way, five acres to the south of Wretham Way, four acres between Wretham Way to the south and Thetford Way to the north, eight acres and a close to the west of Watton Way, a headland of one acre with lands of various men to the south, Wretham Way to the north and Watton Way to the west, three roods next to Watton Way to the east and Wretham Way to the north; six acres and one rood of land were described as being dispersed in the vill and fields of Little Hockham. This account is repeated in a later document dated 1644.

In 1635 there was an admission to a messuage with a croft next to it lying between lands of another tenement to the east and common pasture of Little Hockham to the west, with demesne lands to the north and to the south of it. Earlier in the same year there had been the surrender of a five-acre close called Harwins in Little Hockham.

A final concord of 1619¹³ between Thomas Richardson (Sergeant-at-law), Lord of the manor of Little Hockham, and John Coote, plaintiffs, and Walter Mildmaye and Brigit, his wife, and other deforciantes concerned the manor of Little Hockham and two messuages, two cottages, a toft, four gardens, 100 acres of land, 20 acres of meadow, 60 acres of pasture, 200 acres of furze and heath, 20s of rent and the liberty of a fold in Little Hockham, Illington, Great Hockham and East Wretham. Another document of 1619¹⁴ refers to 30 acres of land of the manor of Little Hockham lying in Great Hockham.

A limited amount of information can be obtained from wills and from two inventories. The inventory of John Shuckforth,¹⁵ dated 1588, states that he lived in Little Hockham although his will¹⁶ records his tenements, houses, lands and other holdings as being 'within the towns and fields of Great Hockham and Little Hockham'. The will gives his status as 'Yeoman' and mentions his tenement called Nobs which was certainly in Great Hockham.¹⁷ The inventory describes him as a Husbandman which may have been his standing in Little Hockham. The value of his possessions listed (less one entry lost by subsequent damage to the manuscript) was £17-14s-10d and the numbers of stock and the quality of the possessions suggest the small peasant farmer the title implies.

A second inventory dated 1608, that of Robert Kinge, Yeoman, of Little Hockham¹⁸ is that of a wealthier person. The value of his goods was given as £822-7s-0d. His house contained a parlour, parlour chamber, hall and hall chamber, a buttery chamber, a little chamber, buttery, pantry and kitchen and a bakehouse and a dairy were also mentioned as well as a woolchamber in which there were 180 stones of wool, valued at £60. There were

rye and malt 'in the chamber' and the produce 'in the barnes' included 150 combs of rye and 140 of barley, with smaller quantities of wheat, peas, vetches, hay and hemp. A considerable quantity of rye had also been sown. Outstanding among the stock were sheep valued at £349. The description accords closely with what might be expected of Breckland agriculture; presumably Kinge's flocks must have been pastured on the western portion of Little Hockham. The details of his house are obviously those of a substantial building, possibly the manor house. Kinge was the tenant of some bond land in Great Hockham in 1599,¹⁷ as was his son Barnabas, and his brother Thomas held land there at farm; both are mentioned in Kinge's will.¹⁹ He released Thomas from his debts to him, Barnabas inherited all his freehold and copyhold property in Hockham and some debts incurred by Robert Hayles of Great Hockham, a son-in-law, were also paid. Various other bequests suggest that Robert Kinge was an influential person in the community.

So far the evidence reviewed has harmonised quite well with the information given by Blomefield. However, some of the wills throw some uncertain light on the question of a church at Little Hockham. Blomefield does not give the reference on which he based his assumption about a church of St. Mary already noted. It is curious that there seems to have been some confusion over the name of the church in Great Hockham in the 15th and 16th centuries. In 1479 William Franceys²⁰ and Richard Franceys²¹ both left instructions for burial in the churchyard of 'St. Mary the Virgin' and 'The Most Holy Virgin Mary' respectively. In the same year Richard Carman²² requested that his body be buried in the churchyard of the 'church of the Mother of God'. In 1535 Alice Harlynge²³ asked to be buried in the churchyard of Our Lady in Hockham. It is possible that the confusion may have arisen because of the existence of side altars in the parish church of Great Hockham; there were certainly guilds of Holy Trinity, of St. John the Baptist and, significantly, of the Blessed Virgin there in 1437²⁴ and an image of St. Katherine was recorded in the same will. Alternatively, the church may, originally, have had a double dedication. It could be that Blomefield's 'evidences' may have been of a similar nature.

Some information about the earlier topography of Little Hockham can be obtained from maps and is summarised on Map 1. Faden (1797)²⁵ shows 'Hockham Parva' as a cluster of buildings near the present bridge across the stream to Illington with the Hall standing in isolation. A Parish Map of 1824²⁶ shows the Common and the Great Common, Watton Way, the Way to Thetford, and the footway from Little Hockham Hall to Great Hockham, a number of named Brecks and various strips within the arable — an obvious relic of earlier times. A few buildings are also shown facing onto the eastern common and correspond quite closely with the group shown by Faden.

Another map²⁷ which must be very close in date marks changes. It is annotated in manuscript 'Purchased by H. S. Partridge, Esq., in 1826 except the part purchased by Mr. Birch'. This last, some 95a-0r-15p, according to the manuscript table of acreages, was the portion next to East Wretham, where Mr. Birch was the landowner. Partridge, who obtained the remaining 630a-0r-21p, owned the Great Hockham estate. It is clear from this map that he had already obtained the northern portion of the old parish at some earlier time. On this second map the Great Common is shown divided into five pieces; after the purchase some became Birch's property and a further new boundary appeared. Furze Moor is shown on both maps in the extreme south-eastern tip of the parish but is only 43-44 acres in area; the 200 acres of furze and heath mentioned in 1619 must therefore have included a great deal of the area marked as brecks in the 19th century. On Map 1 the area described as Sheeps Pasture in Little Hockham comprises the lands named as brecks



in 1824 and a piece then called Sheep's Banbridge. A terrier of Great Hockham dated 1599¹⁷ records that the Sheep's Pasture of Great Hockham had the heath of East Wretham to the west and the Heath and Sheep's Pasture of Little Hockham to the south: this must have been the area later divided into brecks.

The Field Evidence

A substantial proportion of the old parish of Little Hockham is now covered with plantations of trees which effectively conceal any surface evidence which might remain; only the eastern section can be examined. A limited programme of field-walking was undertaken by the author and significant evidence of former occupation was discovered. Map 2 shows the distribution of the finds in relation to the field boundaries of 1824.

To the south-east, south and south-west of Little Hockham Hall Farmhouse the surface of the ground slopes very gently from about 30m to about 26m, part of a crescent-shaped apron of comparatively well-drained, sandy soil bordering the higher ground separating the two streams which unite at the most easterly tip of the parish. It is on this band of territory that the settlement was sited.

Closest to the Hall Farm garden is a zone bordering a hedge of what was known once as Dovehouse Meadow (Site 19612). It is divided into three sections by two ditches which partly enclose what may be a platform, though it is not markedly obtrusive. From both the platform and the area to the north of it there is evidence of occupation from Middle Saxon times to the Late Medieval-Transitional period at least, with some suggestion of Post-Medieval activity nearer the house.

On the platform (Context 5) pimplly Ipswich Ware, Thetford Ware, St. Neots Ware, Grimston-Thetford Ware, Early Medieval sherds (including some of a local pimplly fabric), Medieval unglazed pottery, Medieval glazed pottery, including Grimston Ware, and a quantity of Late Medieval/Transitional pottery, including some large sherds, were found. This context was notable for the presence of many bones, probably domestic refuse, and of some very large flints near the western end.

To the north of this (Context 1) there was a considerable concentration of sherds which included material from the same range of periods as that of Context 5 but with more Ipswich Ware of both pimplly and sandy types. The Medieval sherds included part of what was possibly a curfew and among the Late Medieval/Transitional finds was a jar rim with a lid seating. There was a bodysherd of a glazed fabric with fine white inclusions. Some Post-Medieval glazed red earthenwares and some stoneware occurred here. A small area within the context showed evidence of the presence of a building or a dump of building materials — flints, pieces of mortar, chalk blocks and numerous pieces of brick, but no shaped stone. Quantities of bones were also noted.

Ipswich Ware was not found on Context 4 and the density of finds here was markedly thinner than on the areas to the north. Most of the finds were made close to the ditch which separates this context from Context 5. The range of pottery was similar with, however, the virtual absence of Late Medieval/Transitional sherds. The Early Medieval pimplly fabric was present and there was also an unglazed body-sherd with fine white inclusions. Context 2 is a small gravel rise some 45m to the east of Context 1: Ipswich Ware of both types was found here together with a few Medieval unglazed sherds.

It is quite possible that Little Hockham Hall Farmhouse and its garden conceal a portion of this site and that it may extend under Home Meadow to the east where the surface

does display some inequalities. One bodysherd of unglazed Medieval pottery was recovered from Context 3 and a few pieces of the same kind were found on Site 19611 beyond the house to the west. There appears to have been no northward extension of the concentration near the Hall Farm. Only one unglazed sherd of uncertain date was found near the line of the footpath.

A small quantity of Medieval pottery, largely unglazed, together with a few sherds of Late Medieval/Transitional date were noted at the rather indeterminate Site 19613. A few Medieval sherds, including an Early Medieval unglazed bowl rim occurred as outliers further to the west.

The remaining sites all appear to be associated with the margin of the former common. Only Late Medieval/Transitional and Post-Medieval pottery was found at Site 19614; some building materials were also present. Site 19615 is divided by a drainage ditch, presumably of later date, which is being ploughed in. This is, judging by the pottery found there, a Medieval site which persisted into Late Medieval and, possibly, early Post-Medieval times: the majority of the sherds were of unglazed Medieval fabrics. Site 19616 is also primarily a Medieval site: most of the pottery is unglazed though a few sherds of Grimston Ware were present as were some of Late Medieval and Post-Medieval date, though activity must have been comparatively slight by then. Site 19617 also began in Medieval times, the majority of the sherds found here were of that date, though some Late Medieval/Transitional fragments were present, together with a 16th century green-glazed sherd. One piece of Raeren stoneware and a sherd of an unusual pimply fabric, with an internal clear glaze, of pinkish-brown appearance and having an apparently external applied strip, probably of Late Medieval date, also occurred. Site 19618 bears ample evidence of occupation continuing into recent times, though demolition has removed the buildings still shown on early 20th century maps. However, among the prolific modern remains much Medieval pottery is present including glazed Grimston Ware; some of the local Early Medieval pimply ware was collected. This has been found at a number of sites in Breckland, including West Harling, Kilverstone and Barnham. Sherds of successive later periods continue the sequence to modern times.

There is some evidence of activity in even earlier times. Some worked flints were found on Site 19612, Contexts 1 and 5 (Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age) and a sherd of flint-gritted Prehistoric pottery on Context 1. Another flint-gritted sherd, probably similar, was found on Context 5. Some worked flints occurred on a field well to the west (not shown on Map 2). Romano-British sherds were found at a number of points — Site 19611, Site 19612 Contexts 1, 4 and 5, and at Site 19617. These suggest activity other than occupation; no site has yet been found in the area examined though, as the Peddars Way forms the western boundary of the former parish, it is likely that some settlement of this period was not far away.

CONCLUSIONS

The field evidence shows that Little Hockham, far from dwindling in the post-Domesday period, actually expanded from the core near the Hall Farm in a series of clusters along the edge of the common. It is even possible, though rather unlikely, that there may have been some similar sites along the edge of the Great Common, now concealed under plantations. The core was not abandoned in this period so that it is expansion and not migration to new sites that is seen here.

The early (Mid-Saxon) date of the core is also notable. So far, no comparable site has been discovered in Great Hockham and this poses an interesting question about the early relationship of the two settlements. It is possible that the Little Hockham site was the settlement from which the two Hockhams developed, with Little Hockham declining by Late Saxon times to fit the Domesday description. However, there are significant areas in Great Hockham, including those near the church, that are not easily examined in the field.

The small valley in which Little Hockham and Illington lie may have had much more significance as a focus of activity in earlier pre-Conquest times. Illington is mentioned, with Southery and places in Essex, Middlesex and Surrey, in the will of Theodred, Bishop of London (c.942-957).²⁸

Decay seems to have occurred at some time in the 16th century. This would agree with a developing interest in large flocks of sheep by manorial lords and, as already noted, a large Sheep's Pasture was in existence by 1599. Site 19614 appears to mark an establishment of this period and it lay within an area known as Shepherds Yards in the 19th century. However, the decline was by no means precipitate as witnessed by the mentioning, in 1628, 1635 and 1644, of various properties close to the Common, Watton Way and Wretham Way.

Little Hockham Hall Farmhouse has a deceptive appearance when approached from the north. The 19th century brick facade conceals a timber-framed rear structure with rendered wattle and daub infill dating from about 1600.²⁹ This must be the manor house recorded by Blomefield.

There is a local tradition which places the church on Site 19612, Context 1. There is no firm field evidence to support this — although building materials are present no shaped stone was seen, most of the debris seems to be later than would be appropriate for an early church of the period suggested by Blomefield, though robbing of stone may have occurred. This, taken with the information from wills, must leave the question of the existence of a church unsettled.

Little Hockham does illustrate the dangers of relying purely on documentary evidence for information about settlement desertion. Using the customary sequence of documentary reference (Domesday Book, Nomina Villarum and Lay Subsidy lists), it would be easy to assume that it had virtually vanished by 1316, especially as it is also absent from the ecclesiastical taxation lists of 1254 and 1291.³ Field survey reveals medieval expansion instead. Little Hockham Hall Farmhouse is the ultimate representative of a settlement which has occupied the same site since Mid-Saxon times.

August 1986

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is part of a study of the two Hockhams which is still in progress. The author wishes to thank Major D. E. Trappes-Lomax of Great Hockham Hall for his help and interest and Mr. J. Leech and Mrs. McGregor (G. W. Nurse & Co. Ltd.) for arranging and permitting access to the fields. The staff of the Norfolk Record Office made documents and maps available and permitted use of the 1824 Parish Map as a base for Map 2. From the Norfolk Archaeological Unit Mr. Andrew Rogerson identified finds and Mr. Edwin Rose supplied information from records.

1. Allison, K. J., 1955, 'The Lost Villages of Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology* XXXI, 116-162.
2. Brown, Philippa (ed), 1984, *Domesday Book: Norfolk*.
3. Hudson, W., 1910, 'The Norwich taxation of 1254 so far as relates to the diocese of Norfolk and Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology* XVII, 46-158.
4. *Feudal Aids* III.
5. Hudson, W., 1895, 'The assessment of the townships of the county of Norfolk for the King's tenths and fifteenths, as settled in 1334', *Norfolk Archaeology* XII, 243-297.
6. Blomefield, F., 1805/10, *An Essay Towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, continued by C. Parkin.
7. Morgan, M., 1946, *English Lands of the Abbey of Bec*. See also Chibnall, M., 1951, *Documents of the English Lands of the Abbey of Bec*, Royal Historical Society, in which the custumal of East Wretham quoted by Blomefield (p. 464) is printed. It mentions the names of some fifteen of William of Hockham's tenants 'in Hockham'.
8. N.R.O., MSS 13848 16 F.6.
9. N.R.O., MSS 2522 2 F.2.
10. N.R.O., MSS 13851 16 F.7.
11. N.R.O., MSS 13852 16 F.7.
12. N.R.O., Box 16 F.7.
13. N.R.O., Trappes-Lomax TL 4, 314 x 4.
14. N.R.O., Trappes-Lomax TL 3, 314 x 4.
15. N.R.O., N.C.C. Prob. Inv. 4/123.
16. N.R.O., N.C.C. Wills, 340 Homes.
17. N.R.O., N.R.S. MS 18713 34 x 6.
18. N.R.O., N.C.C. Prob. Inv. 22/83.
19. N.R.O., N.C.C. Wills 121 Spencer.
20. N.R.O., N.C.C. Wills 19 Aubry.
21. N.R.O., N.C.C. Wills 21 Aubry.
22. N.R.O., N.C.C. Wills 19 Aubry.
23. N.R.O., N.C.C. Wills 146 Godsalve.
24. N.R.O., N.C.C. Will of Richard Trapett, Vicar of Hockham, 24 Doke.
25. Faden, W., 1975 (reprint), *Norfolk Record Society* XLII.
26. N.R.O., N.R.S. 19114 54 x 3.
27. N.R.O., N.R.S. 19111 54 x 2.
28. Hart, C. R., 1966, *The Early Charters of Eastern England*, 79.
29. Norfolk Museums Service.

FURTHER DISCOVERIES AT HEYDON HALL, SAXLINGHAM

by Edwin J. Rose

A description of the ruins of Heydon Hall or Saxlingham Place, in the village of Saxlingham near Holt (county sites and monuments record number 3167) was given by the present writer in *Norfolk Archaeology* XXXVIII, 336, together with the findings from trial excavations in advance of a proposed restoration (later abandoned) in 1980.

Subsequently the ruins were left untended, and large portions of what was termed the New Wing in the description collapsed under the influence of both the weather and human agency. A planning application to build a new house in the courtyard and to preserve the ruins as a monument was rejected by the North Norfolk District Council. Following further deterioration a second application to construct a new house within the ruins of the Old Wing, and to demolish the New Wing, was approved. The opportunity was therefore taken to record features of the building newly brought to light, and to excavate certain areas in a more complete manner.