

Aylsham & District u3a Historical Buildings Group

Report on

Single-storey cottage
on the corner of Pound lane and Fox's Loke
known as
26 Pound Lane
Aylsham



West side (facing onto Pound Lane)

Overview

The building presents itself as a small single-storey detached house, dating from the tail end of the 19th century or first quarter of the early 20th century. It stands on a very small corner plot where Fox's Loke meets Pound Lane.

The main part of the building consists a simple rectangle running parallel to Pound Lane. Two projecting porches are attached to this section – one on the end furthest from Fox's Loke and one facing Pound Lane roughly a third of the way in from the Fox's Loke end. At the back of the building, a pitched roof extension at the Fox's Loke end runs almost to the rear boundary. A large flat roofed extension has been added onto the side of the rear extension that is furthest from Fox's Loke.

Externally, all walls are rendered with exposed red brick corners (quoins). All pitched roofs are finished with a covering of red clay 'triple Roman' tiles (sometimes referred to as corrugated tiles).

Inspection findings

In places, the exposed external brickwork on the long front section of the house has been damaged to reveal the bedding mortar. This reveals that the bricks have been bedded in a high quality, hand made lime mortar which was then finished with a black pointing mortar (almost certainly lime) – strong sunshine over more than 100 years has caused most of the black pointing to fade to grey, making it easy to mistake it for modern cement pointing. The external walls are predominantly solid brick of one brick thickness. The flat roofed area possesses cavity walls and cement mortar.



Lime pointing to brickwork. See how it is still black high up where overhanging eaves protect it from strong sunshine but it has faded to grey lower down. Black pointing with red brickwork was popular from about 1880 all the way through to the early 1930s.



High quality lime bedding mortar visible where the very thin layer of faded pointing mortar has been damaged – note the large amounts of cream coloured lime separating the individual sand particles, also the large round white piece of ‘chalk’ (unslaked lime) which is typical of handmade mortars produced from quicklime. Unlike Norwich, in Aylsham these handmade mortars were already being superseded by cheaper commercial bagged dry powder mortars well before the outbreak of World War I. The mortar therefore suggests a build date prior to 1900.

At the base of the walls to the long front section of the house, there is a change of bricks. The mortar used to bed these bricks is much thicker and coarser than elsewhere. Nowadays, it is normal to use cheaper bricks at the base of a wall, but is unusual for pre-World War I buildings. The change of mortar at ground level would have been normal but not necessarily the change to thicker mortar joints. On the two corners next to Fox's Loke, the walls do not properly line up with the brickwork at ground level, suggesting the house may have been rebuilt on the footings of an earlier building. At the front, the corner overhangs the base, while at the back, the corner has been built at a slightly different angle to the base. Only these two corners are obviously affected. There is no change of brickwork at the base of the pitched roof extension.



Brickwork on front corner overhanging the brickwork used to form the base of the walls.



On the porch facing Pound Lane, the art deco detailing half-way up the sturdy timber posts forming the front corners, intricate scrolling to the head board over the door, and the way the side walls and windows randomly cut across the red brick quoins of the main wall, all mark it out as originally an open-sided, open-fronted porch probably added around 1930.

Internally, there are three rooms in a straight line running parallel to Pound Lane. These are 12ft wide – the typical width of purpose built pre-20th century cottages, and rules out an early conversion of outbuildings.

A pair of back to back chimney breasts straddle the wall separating the middle room from the room furthest from Fox's Loke. The lower parts of this wall have been removed on both sides of the chimney breasts, revealing it to be a former outside wall.



Chimney breast and former outside wall as viewed from the middle room. Note the bottom of the wall at the side of the chimney breast showing the angled adjustment made when the wall was removed to accommodate a mismatch in breast width between the two rooms – the mismatch is only about an inch, hence is due to different brick sizes/mortar joint widths i.e. different build dates.

The chimney breasts in the two rooms are of differing dimensions. The breast in the middle room is the standard depth for a late 19th/early 20th century chimney breast and the internal flue design and finish also matches for this period. The projection of the breast in the end room, is typical of that for an early 19th century chimney breast and it is also about an inch wider. The fireplace in the end room has been bricked up so it is not possible to see inside the flue.

The roof structure is two distinct ages. The roof over the pitched roof rear extension is slightly later in construction and was built as an extension to the long main roof – the timbers to the main roof are dirtier and cut with a finer toothed saw than those of the rear extension. The Pound Lane end of the rear extension's roof is also supported by a pair of timbers nailed diagonally across the rafters of the main roof. Although the roof structure of the main roof is clearly late 19th century in date, the horizontal timbers (purlins) above the two rooms running from Fox's Loke to the chimney, have been reused from an earlier roof.



Reused purlin in main roof. The notch is one of many equally spaced along the entire lengths of both reused purlins. Both purlins have been rotated before reuse – the notches are housings for the ends of horizontal timbers called collars that braced the roof in many 18th and early 19th century roof structures.

The former outside wall that the chimney breasts straddle in the rooms below, does not extend up into the roof space. All of the chimney within the roof space is the same age as the three rooms below. That part of the chimney within the roof space (and hence not visible from outside the building), together with the gables (which are rendered externally), are all built with cheap industrially produced bricks called Flettons. Fletton bricks have never been produced in Norfolk so must have been brought by rail. As the railways only reached Aylsham in 1880, this represents the earliest possible date for the construction of the current cottage.

Historical ownership/occupants

(grateful thanks to Maggie Vaughan-Lewis for researching the Manorial Court books from which much of the ownership/occupant information is taken)

- Prior to the development of the area between what we now call Pound Lane and Cawston Road, there was a large field known as Thurston's Close. A close was a piece of land taken and fenced for arable use from a larger common field – in this case the West Field of the town. This probably happened quite early as it is bounded by roadways on each side and is very close to the town. (The 'road from Market Place to the Pound', 'the Road from Aylsham to Cawston', Back Lane, and private road are all used in the descriptions in the manorial court books).
- A leading grocer and draper called Robert Francis had owned Thurston's Close and left it to his two daughters Sarah and Anne. They both married well and sold the land in June 1821 to John Secker, a publican with an eye for property development. The close was divided up into plots and sold over the next few years to various people including John Pilgrim, a gentleman from Norwich, who had a least six plots from Secker. Small houses were erected on the whole area over the next 10-15 years.
- On 20th April 1827 George Holland of Erpingham, a bricklayer, was admitted to two parcels of Thurston Close having paid John Secker, the previous owner, £146 13s (MS 20828 p183 1822-31). One of the parcels was described as being 1 rood 4 perches, with 'a private lane to the north, Back Lane west and Pilgrim land on east and south'. That seems to fit the site that includes 26 Pound Lane, with Fox's Loke being the private lane and Back Lane being Pound Lane. Most of these speculative buyers had to take out a mortgage to cover the cost of the land and Holland was lent £121 by John Pilgrim who seems to be financing quite a lot of the developers. That mortgage was paid off and on 19 May 1828 George and his wife Phillis borrow another £100 from Pilgrim (against the other parcel). It is not stated whether any houses are yet built.
- The 1839 Survey Map of Aylsham by James Wright shows that at the time of the survey, 6 cottages had been erected on the parcel of land owned by George Holland that includes 26 Pound Lane. Wright lists the occupants of the cottages as Joseph March, James Spink, Peter Spink, Richard Norman, William Spink, and Henry Barnard – alas there is no indication of who rented which cottage.
- On 28th April 1841 Holland took out a mortgage of £360 from George Rix on all his property (MS 20829 (1831-42) Rix p319). These mortgages are called conditional surrenders in the manorial court and do not mean that the property passed to the lender, unless of course payment was defaulted on. Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened to George Holland. He had not repaid the last loan before he died in 1855, so the property passed to the lender on the forfeit of the Hollands.
- But George Rix had also died and in due course, his only brother Henry is admitted, (Acc 2008/257/4 p121 14th Aug 1857). The property is described in two parts: the cottages where Stephen Tuddenham, James Ulph, Robert Hunt, Robert Tuck, Henry Barnard and Peter Spink live, bounded by the private road to the north, the land once Pilgrim, now George Soame and John Lockton east and Back Lane to the west – this is the site that includes 26 Pound Lane, although only 2 of the six tenants listed in 1839 are still present. The other part lay to the south of the cottages and faced Pound Lane to the west.
- Henry Rix dies in 1858 and eventually on 25th April 1861 (the court records often lag behind) his widow Mary Rix of Norwich is admitted. The 6 cottages are now occupied by Stephen Tuddenham, James Ulph, Robert Hunt, Joseph Spink, Henry Barnard senior, and Henry Barnard junior.
- Joseph Burrell of Erpingham paid £335 to Mary Rix (Acc 2008-257 (1879-1889) p152 26th May 1881) for the cottages where Stephen Tuddenham, James Ulph, Robert Hunt, Joseph Spink, Henry Barnard snr and jnr, -- Pull, -- Moy jnr & snr, -- Rackham, --Barnard widow do live. Bounded by Fox Loke (north), land of James Breese (e), Wm Calver (s) and Back Lane (w) which Mary had in 1861.
- The cottages subsequently passed to Joseph Burrell jnr the grandson with his mother Louisa Burrell (Acc 2008-257 (1879-1889) p543 8th November 1889).

- Within days, Joseph Burrell sold them on 12th November 1889 to Miss M A Leggett of Heigham for £260 and the parcel was then marked as enfranchised (made freehold) so all future ownership changes disappear from the court book.
- The national land valuation of 1911-12 gives the owner of the 6 cottages as William G. Cooper and the occupant of 26 Pound Lane as Rouse.
- A planning application relating to 26 Pound Lane in 1975 lists the applicant (normally the owner) as P. Wadbrook in Gorleston – interestingly the road given for his/her address (Buxton Close) has never existed so this is assumed to be a clerical error on the part of the local agent handling the application (there is a Buxton Avenue in Gorleston which was being gradually developed piecemeal at the time).

Background information on George Holland – original builder of 26 Pound Lane

- Son of Francis and Mary Holland. Baptised 10th June 1782 in Alby.
- George Holland aged 26 married Phillis Burrell (widow) from Buxton. Her age varies between 11 and 15 years older than George depending on records. Married in Calthorpe Church by Rev H. Marsh on 15th September 1808. The couple were both illiterate just making their mark on the register.
- In the 1841 Census, George Holland's age is given as 55yrs and Phillis's age is given as 70yrs (no address is recorded on the census but it is presumed Erpingham).
- In the 1851 Census, George Holland is recorded as aged 69, an Innkeeper and Farmer (licensee of the Kings Head pub, Erpingham). Other members of the household are:
 Phillis Holland wife aged 80;
 Elizabeth Brett aged 20 servant;
 George Neave aged 55 Agricultural Labourer and lodger;
 Edward Wretham aged 35 blacksmith and lodger.
- George's work as a bricklayer seems to have ended around the time his Aylsham cottages were constructed – he was Innkeeper for the years 1836 – 1851.
- George Holland died Q1 of 1855. Having searched the graveyards of both Erpingham and Calthorpe Churches, no headstone could be identified but at least 50% are illegible due to weathering and/or lichen growth.
- George had 4 younger sisters – one died in infancy, two predeceased him, and one outlived him dying aged 95 in London. George's father died aged 59 in Great Yarmouth.

Background information on earliest known tenants of the 6 cottages (as at 1839)

- Joseph March age 38, Agricultural Labourer (emigrated to Australia in 1846)
 Sophia (presumably wife) age 33 and pregnant with 3rd child (Charles)
 William age 5
 Susan age 2
- James Spink age 33, Agricultural Labourer
 Sarah (presumably wife) age 43
 William age 10
 John age 7
 George age 1
- Peter Spink born 1806 – age 33, Agricultural Labourer
 In the 1841 census there is no mention of a wife, just 3 children and 2 lodgers:
 Mary Spink age 14
 George Spink age 11
 Henry Spink age 9
 John Vardigans age 70 (Labourer/Lodger)
 Mary Vardigans age 60 (Lodger)
- Richard Norman born 1801 – age 38

Sarah (wife) born 1796 – age 43
William (son) born 1834 – age 5

- William Spink born 1786 – age 53, Agricultural Labourer
Married Sarah Haystead in 1827
In the 1841 census Sarah is not listed as present in the household, just 2 children:
Richard age 20; Mary age 15. However, Sarah (age 45) is listed in the household for her
mother Ann (age 70) on Cromer Road along with James Spink (age 10) and William
Haystead (age 15) – bearing in mind the ages of all the Spink children, if the date of the
marriage is correct, all bar one must have been born out of wedlock!
- Henry Barnard born 1811 – age 28, Agricultural Labourer
Elizabeth (wife) – also age 28 and pregnant with 3rd child (Eliza – died between 1841 and
1851)
Henry (son) born 1833 – age 6
George (son) born 1837 – age 2
 - By the time of the 1871 census, Henry Barnard senior (age 61) seems to have an
unnamed second wife and has a 7 year old child living in the household (Ellen) of
unknown relationship.
 - The 1871 census records his eldest son, Henry junior (now age 37), is also an
Agricultural Labourer, rents another of the cottages, is married to Charlotte (age 34)
and they have 6 children (4 sons and 2 daughters)
 - Henry junior dies in 1879 aged 45.

As 26 Pound Lane was a 2-room cottage, it would be deemed overcrowded today regardless of which of the above households called it home in 1839. As even the largest cottages owned by George Holland only consisted of 4 rooms, it must have been particularly difficult for Peter Spink with his 3 mixed gender children approaching/reaching puberty and 2 aged lodgers.

Correlation of findings with historic maps and conclusions

The 1839 Survey Map of Aylsham by James Wright shows a single-storey cottage that almost exactly matches the front part of 26 Pound Lane as it currently exists. Ignoring the circa 1930 front porch, the only apparent difference between the 1839 building and the front section today, is the length – in 1839 it is shown as running from Fox's Loke to the chimney. This fits with the discovery of the remains of an external wall internally at this location. Put together, these indicate the original cottage consisted of two rooms with a single fireplace which possessed an external chimney breast to maximise internal space. It is therefore safe to presume, in the '1839 house' the room with the fireplace was a combined kitchen-living room with either a rudimentary cooking range or (more likely) a general purpose hob grate, and the room closest to Fox's Loke was the bedroom.

From the size of the former external chimney breast and reused purlins in the roof, it is unlikely that the cottage was more than 20 years old in 1839. From the Manorial Court records, we know the land was undeveloped when purchased by George Holland in 1827, with his original mortgage on the land being paid off a year later, suggesting the original cottage was built in 1827/8 – making it a desirable modern property in 1839!

The 1885 Ordnance Survey plan of Aylsham shows that the cottage was now the length it is today – i.e. it was a three room cottage. As the inspection indicates the three rooms were constructed no earlier than 1880 reusing the footings, one end wall, chimney breast, and two roof timbers from an earlier building, the original cottage must have survived (in a dilapidated state) through to 1881-1884 when it was rebuilt and extended. As a new fireplace and chimney breast was constructed within the room that had previously been the kitchen-living room, the original fireplace must have been 'reversed' to serve the new end room. This, being an old style deep fireplace could accommodate a modern (for the time) cooking range so the new end room is likely to have been the kitchen, leaving the middle room as a nominal parlour (it had both a fireplace and its own front door), with the remaining room still being the sole bedroom. The condition of the flue to the middle room also indicates the fireplace has never been intensively used, providing further evidence that the kitchen was moved to the new room.

Again referring to the Manorial Court records, we know that the cottages were sold to Joseph Burrell of Erpingham in 1881 before being inherited and resold in 1889. Taken with the above

inspection findings, we can therefore safely assume the original 2-room cottage was reconstructed and enlarged by Joseph Burrell, most probably in 1882.

When the cottage was next surveyed by the Ordnance Survey, in 1905, it had acquired the porch that stands on the end of what is assumed to have been the 1880s kitchen. No further changes are marked to either the plot or the building. The addition of the porch again backs up the use of the end room as a kitchen, but also suggests it is now a kitchen-living room with the middle room being the main bedroom.

On the 1926 Ordnance Survey plan of Aylsham, the back boundary, which from 1839 until 1905 was always marked as running alongside the back of the 2-3 room cottage, is shown as being moved further back, to its current location, in order to accommodate the pitched roof extension on the back of the cottage. Due to the quality of the lime mortar, this rear extension is likely to be pre-World War I – say 1914. Prior to the construction of this extension, there is no indication on any map or plan of an outbuilding for a toilet... The presence of a small narrow window on the back wall of the back extension indicates that this did (finally) include a toilet. This would have been accessed directly from outside (where the flat roofed extension now stands), with the rest of the cottage affording a degree of privacy from passers by on both roads. The rest of the extension presumably provided an additional bedroom to enable the middle front room to revert back to a parlour.

The addition of an open-fronted porch on the middle room around 1930 provides further evidence that this room was once again back in use as a parlour.

No further changes are recorded by any Ordnance Survey plans up until 1969. The planning history does record that planning permission was granted for an 'extension and internal alterations' in 1975. This must be the flat roofed extension that houses the current kitchen, with the alterations being to create an internal bathroom and incorporate the outside toilet. The mortar for this extension suggested a possible build date of circa 1980, so 1976 for its completion does fit. The Norfolk Records Office holds a copy of a sale leaflet for 26 Pound Lane dating from this period, that describes it as requiring extensive modernisation, and makes no mention of a bathroom other than having a sink and toilet.

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Additional information provided by Maggie Vaughan-Lewis