

Redlingfield - bits and pieces

The Domesday Book: Commissioned in December 1085 by William the Conqueror the Domesday Book recorded Redlingfield as *Radinghefelda* while a 12th century seal records the name of the community as *Radling* and in 1428 it was known as *Redyngfeld*.

The Plague: The bubonic plague of 1348-1349 was responsible for the death of almost one third of England's population and "pestilence 'laid grievous hold on Suffolk' ... there were 15 religious houses in the county whose superiors required Episcopal institution and of those eight of the superiors died in 1349 [including Redlingfield's then Prioress Alice Wynter de Oxford]".⁽¹⁾



Redlingfield Workhouse: "In 1779, the Suffolk Hundreds of Hartismere, Hoxne and Thredling were incorporated under a local Act of Parliament for the better Relief and Employment of the Poor, within the several Hundreds of Hartismere, Hoxne, and Thredling, in the County of Suffolk (19 Geo.3 c.13). However, the Incorporation never raised the £16,000 required for the erection of a House of Industry [workhouse]. Several member parishes did, however, operate workhouses of their own including Eye, Mendlesham, Occold, Palgrave, Redlingfield, Westhorpe, Wetheringsett and Wortham.

"The Hartismere Poor Law Union formally came into being on 1st September 1835. Its operation was overseen by an elected Board of Guardians, 37 in number, representing its 32 constituent parishes" including Redlingfield. Walcott, the former workhouse, is pictured left.⁽²⁾

1821 Census: The census recored 23 houses, which were home to 117 males and 105 females.⁽³⁾

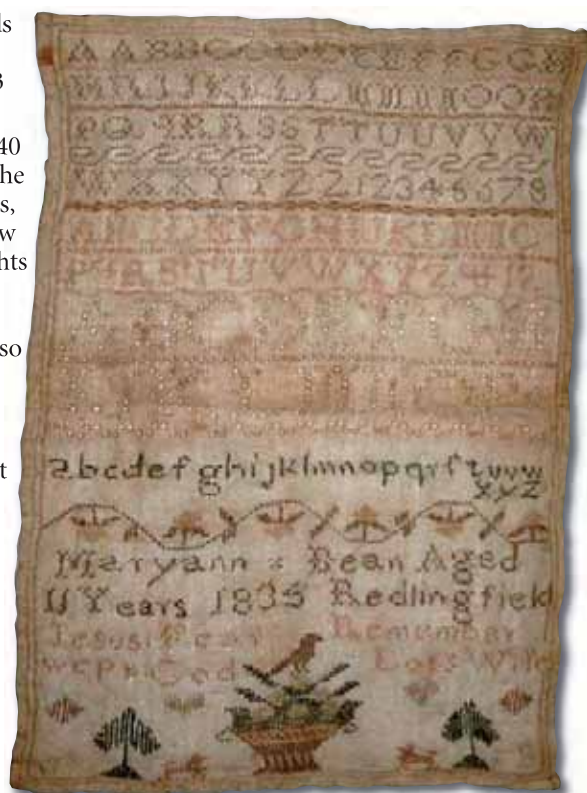
1835 sampler: The sampler (pictured right), which is sadly quite faded, reads "Maryann Bean 11 years 1835 Redlingfield" and "Jesus Wept - Fear God - Remember Lots Wife". The 1835 looks as if it has been altered from first 1833 then 1834. Many thanks to Alan Johnson for lending us this sampler.

1844 gazetteer: White's 1844 gazetteer stated that Redlingfield contained "240 souls" and 1,074 acres, 3 roods. 13 oles of land, "all, excepting about 100A., the property of Wm. Adair, Esq., the lord of the manor, impropiator of the tithes, and patron of the Church, which is a perpetual curacy, valued at £71, and now enjoyed by the Rev. Chas. Notly, B. D., of Eye" ... locals listed were wheelwrights Thomas Bane and Robert Bolton, carpenter George Cracknell, blacksmith Oliver Howes, corn miller and beer house proprietor William Rowe, farmers John Barnes, Robert Bolton, Charles Cracknell of Rookery Farm, who was also the tax collector, George Cracknell of Hall Farm, Mary Ann Cracknell, Thomas Cracknell, Maria Johnson and Edward Platford (listed in a later directory as Platfoot).⁽⁴⁾

1855 gazetteer: In 1855 White's gazetteer the village contained "251 souls". It said of the church that in "the hollow part of the wall, at the west end, is a swarm of bees, which settled there about 30 years ago, when they are said to have followed a corpse brought here for interment." It lists wheelwright and joiner Robert Bolton, Harvey James's beerhouse, blacksmith Alfred Howes, corn miller William Rowe, shopkeeper Roger Taylor, shoemaker George Witton, farmers John Barnes, Robert Bolton, John Cracknell of Wash and Green Farm, Mrs Mary Cracknell of Rookery Farm, the Johnson brothers of Hall and Mill Farms and Edward Platfoot of Cross Farm.⁽⁵⁾

1896 directory: Kelly's 1896 directory stated: "Redlingfield is a parish and village, 3½ miles south-by-east from Eye terminal station on a branch from Mellis of the Great Eastern railway ... The living is a vicarage, tithe rent-charge £8, glebe 60 acres at Shipmeadow, net yearly value nil, and is at present (1896) vacant, the Rev. A. J. Spencer, vicar of Eye, taking charge of the parish for the Bishop of Norwich; it is in the gift of Sir Hugh Edward Adair bart ... The parish is principally the property of Sir Hugh Edward Adair bart. who is lord of the manor ... The soil is loam; subsoil, chiefly clay. The chief crops are wheat, barley, clover, peas and beans. The area is 1,060 acres; rateable value, £754; the population in 1891 was 175." It list George Bayles Cracknell as the parish clerk and that letters, received through Eye by foot post every day, arrive at 8.50am. The "Wall Post Box, near the church, is cleared at 8am week days only." A School Board of five members was formed in March, 1894, and Edward Bond, of The Rookery, Eye, was made clerk to the board. The mixed school was built in 1872 and catered for the 43 local children. Average attendance was 40. Locals listed in the directory were: school mistress Miss Elizabeth Barnes, wheelwright Joseph Coe, William Edward Gray of the Crown Public House, blacksmith George Bayles Howes, farmers George Cracknell of Wash Farm, Walter Cracknell of The Rookery, George Frederick Goldspink, Benjamin Howlett, William Lawes, William Mole, who was also a shopkeeper, and David Reeve of Redlingfield Hall, who was also assistant overseer and highway surveyor.⁽⁶⁾

1912 directory: Kelly's 1912 directory has Redlingfield's population for 1911 at 167 with Martin Cracknell now the parish clerk. William Edward Gray of Redlingfield was correspondent to "Public Elementary School (mixed)", which now served 32 children with and average attendance of 31. Locals listed were: schoolmistress Miss Gertrude Rutter, wheelwright Joseph Coe, William Edward Gray of the Crown Public House, who was also an assistant overseer, blacksmith George Bayles Howes, farmers Charles Edward Bolton, Mrs Arthur John Brady, Walter Cracknell of The Rookery, Allan Thomas Edward, Mrs George Frederick Goldspink, Benjamin Howlett, Samuel Jackson, James Manning and Arthur Rayner.⁽⁷⁾



Sources: (1) *A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles* - By J. E. D. Shrewsbury - Cambridge University Press, 2005. (2) www.workhouses.org.uk (3) *The Norfolk and Norwich Remembrancer and Vademecum* [by J. Matchett]. Edition: 2. 1822. (4) *History, Gazetteer, and Directory of Suffolk, and the Towns Near Its Borders: Comprising ... a General Survey of the County, and Separate Histories & Statistical & Topographical Descriptions of All the Hundreds, Liberties, Unions, Boroughs, Towns, Ports, Parishes, Townships, Villages, & Hamlets ...* By William White, 1844. (5) *History, Gazetteer, And Directory Of Suffolk*. By William White. 1855. (6) *Kelly's Directory of Suffolk*. 1896. (6) *Kelly's Directory of Suffolk*. 1912.

Redlingfield in pictures



Redlingfield school, left; Redlingfield boys near the Crown pub, right; a house - now demolished - near the Crown, far right. Below, from left, Occold Corner, Coronation celebrations in 1953 in the middle of the village, and village pump and forge.



Above, from left: Redlingfield youngsters enjoy the long hard winter of 1962-63; Judith Crisp is one of the customers aboard Redlingfield's first scheduled bus service; what can happen when a high-tipper trailer over-balances a tractor leaving it hanging dangerously in the air. The release on the trailer failed, and, when the load of beet was tipped, it stayed in the trailer over-balancing the tractor. Driver Eric Lister fell from the cab breaking his collarbone. Edmund Abbott who saw the whole thing from a neighbouring field managed to switch the engine off using a two-tined fork. The photographs show heavy machinery recovering the tractor which was left dangling for a couple of days in Redlingfield in the early 1960s. Left, unveiling of the old village sign carved by Norman Kerry. The old sign is now in the porch of the village church.



Youngsters celebrating Christmas in the church, above; Jubilee celebrations in 1977 at Peter & Joyce Saunders' farm, below; fancy dress and BBQ in the centre of Redlingfield. Many thanks to villagers, especially Eddie & Edith Coe, for these pictures.



Redlingfield's Benedictine Priory

This small community of Benedictine Nuns was founded in 1120 by Manasses, Count of Guisnes and his wife, Emma, who was the daughter and heiress of William de Arras, Lord of the Manor of Redlingfield. In the same year, Redlingfield Church was appropriated to the priory, which was erected beside it. In later years the priory was able to draw revenue from parts of the manors of Hickling (Norfolk) and Rishangles, also portions of the money and tithes paid to the churches of Walpole, Melton and Levington. The nuns were able to give the aged and poor inhabitants a daily dole of pence, bread, beef and herrings throughout Lent and Easter each year at a cost of £8.

It seems the priory was not free from scandal. One notorious Prioress was Isabel Hermyte (who served from 1419-27). She was the subject of a Bishop's Enquiry in 1427. It appears that she had not made confession for at least two years, neither had she observed Sundays and religious festivals. What was worse, she had taken to sleeping in a private room with Joan Tates, a novice, she had "lain violent hands" upon Agnes Brakle on St Luke's Day and she had been alone with Thomas Langelond, the bailiff, in "private and suspicious places" such as a small hall with windows closed, and "sub heggerowes". She had neglected her priory in other ways and was a bad influence on Alice Lampit, her Sub-Prioress. She resigned, the Sub-Prioress did penance the following Sunday by wearing white flannel and no veil, and the other five nuns and two novices were made to do penance by fasting on bread and beer every Friday.

In 1514, Bishop Nykke visited Redlingfield and all was not well. Alice Legate, the Prioress, was not satisfied with the obedience of the nuns, and the nuns complained that the Sub-Prioress was cruel and severe in administering corporal punishment, occasionally drawing blood. In addition to this there were no curtains between the beds in the dormitory and boys had been allowed to sleep there. There was no proper infirmary and the refectory was not being put to its proper use as a dining hall. It seems that this was all put in order because at later visitations in 1520, 1526 and 1532, all was found to be satisfactory.



The priory was finally suppressed, with other smaller monasteries, in 1536 and the nuns were sent back into normal life. Each was equipped with the paltry sum of 23s 4d with which to establish themselves in their new lives. Their two Chaplains received 25 shillings each and their 13 servants received small sums of money. Other than these trifling "rewards" they were turned out penniless. Grace Sampson, the Prioress, fared a little better – she was granted a pension of 20 marks per year. The priory buildings and property were granted in 1537 to Sir Edmund Bedingfield (the next village has the same name as the family). The manor remained in Bedingfield hands until 1636, after which it was owned by the Willis and Adair families.

The inventory of possessions of the priory, made in 1536 by the Commissioners, shows that the priory Church possessed the following: a silver chalice, an alabaster table, three altar cloths, two large and two small candlesticks, a Missal – a liturgical book containing all instructions and texts necessary for the celebration of Mass throughout the year. In the Lady

Chapel was a hanging for the altar, also a linen cloth and super-frontal – a cloth which is placed over the top of an altar, two cruets and sacring-bell – commonly referred to as the Mass bell. In the vestry were stored a crucifix, a cope – a very long mantle or cloak, a set of black velvet vestments for Celebrant, Deacon and Subdeacon, also russet damask, red silk and blue silk chasubles – vestments. Several of these vestments, however, were described as being of "lytell worthe".

Some authorities state that the Priory Church was actually to the south of the parish church and others maintain that St Andrew's served as the Priory Church. The latter seems reasonable because an official list of churches appropriated to monasteries, made in 1416 states that the nuns of Redlingfield had held the parish church to their own use since the foundation of the priory. St Andrew's also stood within the priory precincts and a community which usually numbered about ten nuns would not need a large church.

There is also some doubt as to what the building now used as a barn for Redlingfield Hall was originally used for. It is about 50 feet long and stands north-south. Some experts believe that it was the infirmary. Another authority says that it was two-storied and could therefore have been the guesthouse. The priory fish-ponds also remain to the west. ⁽¹⁾

"Population Counts: There were 9 in 1427; 10 in 1520; more than 6 in 1526; and 9 (7 nuns and 2 chaplains) in 1532. A fifth documented count established the population of nuns to be 7 in 1536. **Economic Activities:** Inventories taken at the Dissolution list a bakehouse and brewhouse (Religious Women in Medieval East Anglia: History and Archaeology c. 1100-1540, 33). **Servants etc:** There were also more than 23 servants, 2 priests, 4 lay women and 17 men." ⁽²⁾



"Redlingfield is one of the very few religious houses omitted from the taxation roll of 1291; it was probably exempted on the ground of exceptional poverty. In 1343, it was stated that the prioress held part of the tithes of corn, wool, and lambs of Redlingfield worth two marks a year, and also forty acres of land worth 14s. 4d." ⁽³⁾

Pictured, from top, are: a Benedictine monk; a Benedictine nun; a portrait of St Benedict; part of the priory now used as a barn; St Andrew's church.

Sources: (1) This information was taken from a guide compiled by Roy Tricker, who thanked Rev David Streeter, James Risk, Cynthia Brown and George Pipe for information and advice, also the staff of Suffolk Record Office for the use of their facilities. (2) Monasticon (<http://monasticon.usc.edu/>) a website profiling women's religious communities that existed between 400 and 1600. (3) A History of the County of Suffolk: Volume 2 - William Page. This part-volume covers the medieval religious houses of Suffolk, including the abbey of Bury St Edmunds.





REDLINGFIELD'S B-17 MEMORIAL

A memorial to commemorate the ten crew of an American B-17 bomber that crashed in the village in the Second World War was dedicated on Saturday May 15th 2010.

Older villagers remember seeing the bomber "fall out of the sky" on November 19th 1943. Redlingfield Parish Council, with the help of the 95th Bomb Group Heritage Association in Horham and 95th Bomb Group Memorials Foundation in the US, unveiled the memorial near the site of the crash on Green Lane. The unveiling was part of the 95th heritage association's big open weekend and reunion tour when former US servicemen and relatives of those who served at Horham airfield during World War Two visited the UK.

The memorial contains a specially-commissioned black granite plaque from Perfitts in Diss listing the names of the crew. The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's Douglas C47 (DC3) Dakota ZA947 performed a flypast.

When it crashed near Green Farm in Redlingfield, the B-17 exploded, destroying the farmhouse and killing all 10 crew. Miraculously, a heavily pregnant woman and her two-year-old daughter, who were in the farmhouse when it collapsed around them, survived the blast from the airplane that was fully-loaded with bombs, ammunition and fuel. No villagers were seriously hurt and that girl – Ann Stebbings – joined USAAF veteran Staff Sgt Earl Joswick, who knew one of the crew members – to lay wreaths as the memorial was unveiled and dedicated. Two other veterans, in the UK as part of the reunion tour, attended the dedication, Staff Sgt Frank Martin and 1st Lt Robert Spinnenweber.

Parish council chairman Janet Norman-Philips acted as master of ceremonies and there were speeches by: James Mutton of the 95th heritage association; the leader of Mid Suffolk District Council, Tim Passmore; the vice chairman of Mid Suffolk District Council, Stuart Gemmill; and the vice chairman of Suffolk County Council, Eddy Alcock. Particularly moving were the speeches by Janie McKnight, president of the 95th memorials foundation, and USAF Lt Col Brent R Vosseller of Lakenheath. Janie's father-in-law, David T McKnight was one of the first Americans on the scene of the crash. She listed the ten airmen who lost their lives in the crash. Lt Col Brent R Vosseller, a F15E Strike Eagle pilot, spoke with great sincerity and admiration for the B-17 pilot, Kenneth Rongstad, who had weeks before the crash successfully ditched a B-17 in the North Sea. Lt Col Vosseller said, as a fighter pilot, the one thing he really fears is ditching in the unforgiving North Sea. A bagpiper, David Harper, and a bugler, RAF Honington's director of music, Tom Millford, added to the atmosphere as a crowd of some 200 filled the small lane. In a parade marshalled expertly by John Elliott, the Royal British Legion and the Royal Air Forces Association paraded with Diss

Air Cadets and the 95th's own standard.

Wreaths are now laid on the memorial on the anniversary of the crash, for Remembrance Day and during the annual reunion tour. Before the memorial was dedicated efforts were made to get in touch with relatives of the crew, however, it was not until after the unveiling that thanks to Redlingfield's website relatives of four crew members in the US, including those of the pilot and co-pilot have been in touch with the village. For more information see the village website www.redlingfield.suffolk.gov.uk or visit the official UK museum of the 95th Bomb Group, the heritage association's Red Feather Club in Horham, which is open on the last Sunday of every month May to October inclusive, 10am-4pm.

Pictured, clockwise from top right, are: the DC3; the crowds before the dedication; standards parading from Green Farm; a moment of silence; Janie McKnight; Lt Col Brent Vosseller, Earl Joswick, Robert Spinnenweber, Frank Martin and chaplain Capt Richard Holmes; Glenn Miller, veteran Ben Roujansky and Manday Miller in 2011; veterans Ben Roujansky, Ray Waters and Herbert Wilkov after laying a wreath in 2011; members of the crew being buried at the Veteran's Cemetery in New Albany, Indiana; the B-17 crew; Eddie Coe being interviewed at the dedication by the BBC; and Earl Joswick being interviewed by ITV.

