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People and places of medieval Brundall



*Medieval life:
Sowing and
reaping.
Illustrations by
Jean Smith*

Ann-Marie Simpson reveals her research into Brundall in the Middle Ages

Norfolk Record Office holds a number of medieval documents relating to Brundall. Most of them are difficult to transcribe or translate without training in medieval handwriting and Latin. However, 'The Extent of Londes (lands) in Brundale' dated 1481

looked particularly interesting.¹ I was pleasantly surprised to find it not only written in English but in a reasonably clear hand. Having said that, it was many pages long and the ink in places was quite faint. The effort paid off. It included over 100 different field, roadway or

tenement names and 45 names of people either living or holding land here. I later heard that although originally written in 1481 this was a copy made in the 16th century. It may have been needed at a time when the rapid enclosure of what had once been common land or

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small tenancies was one of the causes of Kett's rebellion in 1549.

There is no map included so it is difficult to be sure where exactly these locations were. Estate maps were virtually unknown until the 17th century. Also there was more than one manor in Brundall then, and this document only concerns one. Domesday recorded three in 1086. One belonged to the King, and formed part of the land given to Battle Abbey at its foundation in 1094; one to the Bishop of Thetford, before Norwich became the seat of the Bishop and one to Gilbert the Arbalister, who was either a crossbow soldier or a crossbow maker and lived in Norwich. It was common too for manors to possess land outside their main location so some land is within neighbouring parishes. However, some places are bounded by *The Kinges Highway* (Brundall Street) to the north or south or by *The Kinges' River* to the south so we have some idea where they were.

Here are just a few:

Blomes yarde lay north of the Street and had the tenements *Telinges* and *Baldwyns* on either side. It was held by **Vincent Pope**. He was perhaps related to the **Robert Pope** who had been accused at the Braydeston manor court in 1424 of not having his dogs under control. The early 20th century archivist Fred Johnson thought he lived on the site of the Ram Inn.

Bromeclose lay between Brundall common to the south and the Street to the north.

Clippergate perhaps referenced sheep farming, as too *Ramesgrave*. The respected historian William Blake, the father of Lord Blake of Braydeston, heard local people in the mid 20th century speaking of 'Clip a Gap' as being an area of what is now Cucumber Lane. *Lambkyns*

perhaps had a similar reference but was more likely named after the tenant. Lambkyn was a Fleming surname so whoever held it may have been a descendent of the many Flemish immigrants to England in previous centuries. On the 1839 Brundall Tithe Map, at the east end, are two fields named respectively Rams Grove and Lambkins. Were these the original sites of *Ramsgrave* and *Lambkyns*? Land was often named after natural features. This may be the case for *Bromeclose*. (One possible derivation of 'Brundall', according to



the Oxford English Place-Names Dictionary, is "a broomy nook of land".) Was *Turbuttes* close to what had once been a peat digging i.e. a turbery? *St Lawrence [sic] Lane* was no doubt what we now call Church Lane, which appears to be an extremely old trackway. We are told that this lay west of *Hallclose*. *Hallclose* was an 'inclose' or enclosure of land of a **Richard Horne** and this in turn lay west of the close held by a **John Welles**, with a marsh of **William Gyles** on the south and *The Kinges Highway* (The Street) north. It would seem a

lot of this land would have been where Yare Valley Rise is today, with some of it going down beyond the railway. This makes sense in another way too. The site of the original manor 'house' or property (of one of the manors!) is on the marsh the other side of the railway and was surveyed in the 1960s. *Hallclose* might refer to this. By the 15th century the manor building may have already been abandoned, landlords preferring to live elsewhere.

Here are some more field or place-names: *Bartlettes*, *Baldwyns*, *Battes*, *Blowfielde Fourde*, *Le Chaunter Dale/Dole*, *Clarkes Dole*, *Le Comiger Close*, *Grimmisgrave* (probably referring to a grove of trees rather than flint mines!), *-Le Marle Pittes*, (marl being very important to an agrarian economy), *Grenegatewaie*, *Richelesse*. *North*, *South* and *Westfield* are also mentioned, giving an idea of where the individual parcels of land were roughly situated.

Kerlyngris appears, as with others included in the 1481 document, in an even older document dated 1366, transcribed by William Blake. This concerns the dower allotted to **Beatrice**, the widow of **Thomas de St Omer**, a previous lord of the manor. By this time Beatrice had already remarried. Thomas had been tenant in chief of Brundall manor. The dower lands were significant:

'a third part of the manor of Brundale namely...a third part of the smaller grange towards the east... The whole of a house on the west side of the manor attached to the said grange at the west end...a third part of all the court called Gateyard with ingress and egress at both gates; the advowson (The right to recommend or appoint clergy to a particular vacant benefice or church) of Brundale church...of the

Drawings by Jean Smith



arable land in **Aploncroft** 7 acres, at **Grenegate** in one piece of land 11 acres, in a piece of land at **Grymesgrave** 8 acres. In a piece of land at **Kerlyngris** along the east side by land of Thomas Stannard and so **Lincar** 10 acres of land with liberty of the fold... of meadow and pasture of the whole of the east enclosure extending from the entry of the manor by the east end of the greater grange and by the **'Saute'** to the river bank called the **'Ee'** with all the east garden meadows, pastures... of all the east side aforesaid and the **Fysshousflet**, all the moat with piece of ground therein... only excepted all the **Westker** with all the pasture by the public north road and with **Soinger** as appears by a ditch... from the said

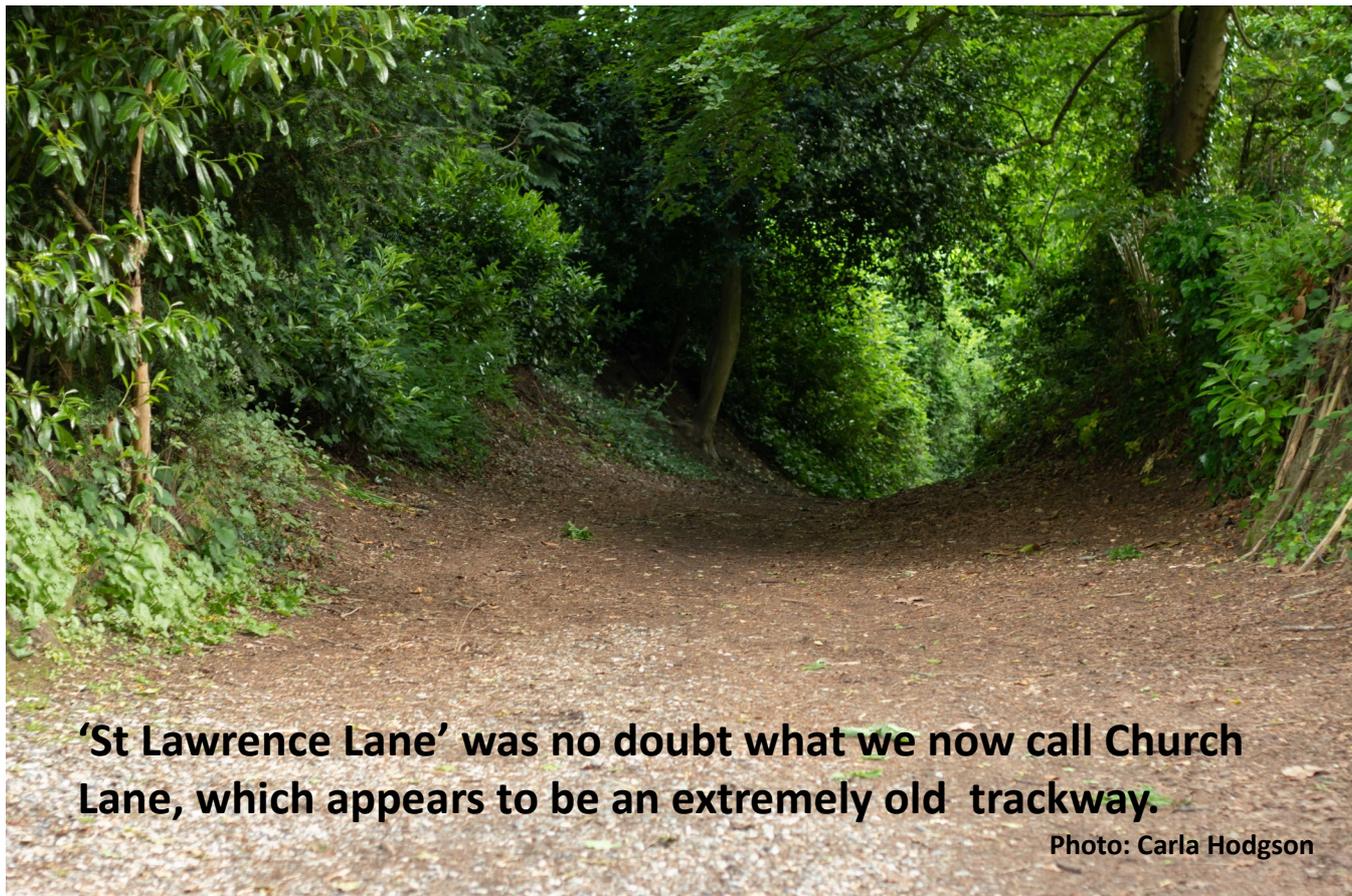
north road to the **Ripe** as by metes (i.e. boundaries) set there; of the wood a third part of a meadow called the **Slynt** on the west side with a third part of the **Reddole** opposite the said wood... of waste tenements of divers tenants of the manor a messuage, 6 acres of land and a half acre of meadow sometime **William Lamekyn** a messuage 7 acres and a half of **William Richilde**, a messuage 6 acres of land. 1 acre 1 rood of meadow late of **Thomas Richilde** and 4 acres late of **William Emelet**. Also tenants at fee farm namely **John Baldwyne**... and of freeholders the service of **John Flegard**... and of **William Skemy**... also **John Baldwyn** tenant for life... also **John Dymet** a *nief* (i.e. a villein or serf)

of the said manor...'

A further related document includes more locations:

'A moiety of all the houses in the manor outside the moat'... 'arable in **Chirchecroft** ... land at **Wellehill**... lands in a plot called **Fyveacris**, **le Cause**, a moiety of all the pasture near **'e Westker**... a third part of a wood called **le Clynt**²... Names of people include **William Turbut**, **Thomas atte Ker**, **John Neweman** and **Henry Batte**.

Were the tenements **Emettes**, **Richlesse**, **Dymot**, **Lambkins** and **Turbutes**, listed in the 1481 Extent, previously the homes of William Emelet, William Richilde, John Dymet, William Lamekyn and William Turbut?



‘St Lawrence Lane’ was no doubt what we now call Church Lane, which appears to be an extremely old trackway.

Photo: Carla Hodgson

1366 was just 15 years after the Black Death had reduced England’s population by perhaps nearly 50%. There had been a recurrence of it too in 1361. Does the reference to ‘waste tenements of divers tenants’ suggest a result of depopulation? Because so many people had died, landowners were finding it difficult to get people to work on their manor estates. Many survivors left their ancestral manors to find better paid work in others. It also led to people from outside the manor buying up land as an investment.

The famous **William Paston** figures in a deed of 1427³ which states that he and **‘William Bernham, Clerk’**, are holding the manor of Brundall whose tenant in chief was the Bishop of Norwich. Under the terms of the late Bishop

Alexander’s will, profits of the manor were to be used to pay for masses to be sung for him at the Cathedral. In this deed they convey the manor to a **Ralph Harpley** on condition that 160 marks to be paid to the Cathedral convent to celebrate masses for 20 years. It’s possible that *Chaunters Dole* and *Clerke’s Dole* mentioned in the 1481 document were part of that land.

Both the 1366 and the 1481 documents hint at working life in the village. Does *Fishoussflet* suggest fish processing was going on here? There are a number of rent payments ‘in kind’ of combes or bushels of barley in the 1481 document. In the Norwich City Records there is reference to a **Margery of Brundall** who worked there as a brewster—a female

brewer.⁴ Maybe she got her barley from Brundall...

My appreciation for the work of the late Eileen Watson who shared her extensive research with me and assisted George Levine in producing his history of Brundall.

Ann-Marie Simpson

NOTES

1. Norfolk Record Office MC 1800/12, 828X3
2. *Clynt or Slynt means a cliff or high crag. Perhaps describes the steep slope from the bottom of the Brundall Gardens/Chancel Close area to the marshes below.*
3. Norfolk Record Office Ref. DCN 44/17
4. From *‘Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England 1300-1600’* by Judith M. Bennett, 1996 - (Norwich City Records held at NRO)

There are lots more documents needing searching for information on medieval and Tudor Brundall. If you have an interest, please let me know! Contact Ann-Marie: amarie@uwclub.net.