

Object(s): Group Photograph, Framed

Object Number(s): STMEA:1998-35.1

Researcher details: Richard Hall, Volunteer

The Photograph

Dispersed among the wide landscape of Suffolk, are many ancient farms and landscapes. This photograph in our collection is one such example. It is a photograph of Wilby Hall, situated just outside the village of Wilby, near Stradbroke.

The photograph is mounted and framed by a gilt frame. It is interesting because it shows a group of people, in front of Wilby Hall and is inscribed "1837 - 1897 God Save The Queen", which means that it can be fairly safely assumed, that the photograph was taken on or around the time of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. This event having taken place on 22nd June 1897, just four years before she passed away.

Wilby Hall

Wilby Hall is in the fairly unique position of being both a Grade II Listed building¹, and a listed heritage monument².

The house itself was built in the 1570's. It has a terracotta panel bearing a date of 1759. Over the centuries, extensive alterations and extensions have taken place including the addition of a large dairy facility in the 19th Century. The British Listed Buildings website suggests that many of the timbers visible in the first floor were applied to the building (i.e. not part of the original structure).

An Ordnance Survey map of 1903³, shows the farmhouse, situated at the end of a long driveway and next to several outbuildings. The house itself is bounded on two sides by a moat which is believed to be medieval in origin. This suggests that the site is much older than the date of the present farmhouse so there may have been an earlier building on the site, possibly removed to build the present house.

Many of the outbuildings, probably date from the Victorian period and give an indication to the nature of the pasture farming which took place.

The photograph appears to have been taken at the rear of the Hall. The external walls of the Hall have been plastered over and lime washed, covering the timber frame and brick work beneath. Plastering external walls was quite typical during the 19th Century as people sought to extend and

¹ Stuff G. Wilby Hall, Wilby, Suffolk [Internet]. Britishlistedbuildings.co.uk. 2020 [cited 11 June 2020]. Available from: <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101352214-wilby-hall-wilby#.XuH650VKiU>

² AD) M, (ESF14047) E. WBY 002 - Wilby Hall - Suffolk Heritage Explorer [Internet]. Heritage.suffolk.gov.uk. 2020 [cited 11 June 2020]. Available from: <https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/Monument/MSF3064>

³ Suffolk XXXVII.NE (includes: Brundish; Laxfield; Stradbroke; Wilby.) [Internet]. Old Maps of England. 1903 [cited 11 June 2020]. Available from: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/101577080>

‘modernise’ old buildings. Today, the Hall can be seen, restored to its former Tudor glory as befits a listed building.

Who lived at Wilby Hall?

It is interesting to note that Wilby Hall was a ‘Tenanted Farm’ which means that whoever was living in the farm at the time would be a tenant rather than the owner of the land.

My research from the Suffolk Archives, indicates that at the time of our photograph, Wilby Hall, along with many surrounding farms and houses, was part of the Flixton Hall Estate⁴. According to Kinglsey⁵, In 1888, Sir Hugh Edward Adair, the 3rd Baronet of Waveney, owned Flixton Hall, near Bungay and its surrounding estate.

The Suffolk Archive records show that Edward Goldspink took on tenancy of Wilby Hall alongside lands in Stradbroke, Laxfield and Brundish In January of 1882. The scale of the tenancy suggests that he would by that time have been either an experienced farmer or else a budding entrepreneur because British agriculture was at that time still in depression as a result of the repeal of the Corn Laws⁶. Clearly if he was to be successful, Wilby Hall would have to be mainly a dairy farm rather than arable (for growing crops).

To return then to the names of some of the people who might be in our photograph. Kellys Directory of Suffolk from 1900⁷, confirms that Edward Goldsmith was still farming at Wilby Hall at that time. The 1891 Census⁸ lists the Head of House as Edward Goldspink aged 39. He had a Housekeeper Hannah Read (aged 42) and three “servants” listed as: Jane Neaves (18) “Dairy Maid”, Robert Baker (15) and Charles Freeman (14) both “Farm Servants”. I suspect they are certainly among the 30 people who appear in the photograph. So, who might the other people have been? I don’t suppose we will ever know with any certainty, but it is likely that they are farm workers and other villagers who helped on the farm during the year.

Queen Victoria and the Diamond Jubilee

That the people of Great Britain held Queen Victoria in such high esteem may seem strange to today. However, Victoria presided over a period of dramatic industrial and societal change in this country during the 63 and a half years her reign. Marked to a great extent by the Great Exhibition of 1851. The railways grew, new inventions and scientific discoveries flourished and factories were developed, the Empire expanded into new territories and Britain was a major economic power in

⁴ Catalogue View | Suffolk Heritage Direct [Internet]. Dswebhosting.info. 2020 [cited 11 June 2020]. Available from: [http://www.dswebhosting.info/Suffolk/SRODServe/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Site31&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=show.tcl&dsqSearch=\(RefNo==%27741%2FHA12%2FD8%2F8%2F82%27\)](http://www.dswebhosting.info/Suffolk/SRODServe/dserve.exe?dsqIni=Dserve.ini&dsqApp=Site31&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=show.tcl&dsqSearch=(RefNo==%27741%2FHA12%2FD8%2F8%2F82%27))

⁵ Kingsly N. Ireland [Internet]. Adair of Ballymena Castle and Flixton Hall, baronets. 2013 [cited 11 June 2020]. Available from: <https://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2013/04/23-adair-of-ballymena-castle->

⁶ Dymond and Northeast – A History of Suffolk (1995).

⁷ Kelly's Directory of Suffolk 1900-09. London: Kelly's Directories Ltd; 1900.

⁸ UK Government. Census, Birth and Marriage Records for 1841-1911. UK Government; 2020.

Europe and beyond. Matthew⁹ describes how by the 1860's, 'free trade had become a central orthodoxy of British politics.'

By the time of Diamond Jubilee in 1897, celebrating 60 years of her reign, Victoria's grandchildren ruled over half of Europe. Indeed, an age which many people looked on with great patriotism. It is therefore no paradox that the country celebrated and were proud to be associated with the Diamond Jubilee.



Image: Queen Victoria. Official Diamond Jubilee photograph by W & D Downey¹⁰

The Diamond Jubilee celebrations took place on 22nd June 1897, by which time Queen Victoria was already the longest reigning monarch in Britain. After the death of Prince Albert her husband, who died in 1861, she became less of a public figure. However, she retained a special place in the hearts of her subjects who came out in the thousands to witness the Queen's six-mile procession through the streets of London to St Paul's Cathedral. In deference to her age, the religious celebrations were undertaken outside the cathedral, with the Queen sat in her carriage.

⁹ Matthew.H. The Liberal Age (1851-1914). The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain. Oxford University Press. 1984

¹⁰ Downey W. Queen Victoria. Official Diamond Jubilee Photograph [Internet]. 1897 [cited 15 June 2020]. Available from: By W. & D. Downey (active 1855-1940) - collections.canadapng.org, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=780046>



Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 1DL

Tel: 01449 612229

www.eastanglianlife.org.uk

Prime Ministers from all over the British Empire were invited to attend the event, in order to avoid having to invite Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, whom it was believed, could cause trouble at the event!¹¹

Rural Life in the 1890's

Life in the countryside, during the reign of Victoria, was a world apart from the lives of those living in towns and cities. There was both hardship and poverty in many areas of the countryside, caused in part by the enclosure of fields and open land (The Enclosure Acts of 1750-1860) and liberalisation of the market for grain (The Corn Laws 1815-1846), which caused prices to fall significantly. Coupled with the introduction of steam power (although much farm work was still done by horses) to several of the larger farms, the effect on wages was palpable. Many agricultural workers left the land to find work in the new factories which were opening up in towns and cities across England. Matthew,¹² writing about the 'Liberal Age', suggests the rural to urban migration from Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire as being as high as 35% between 1841 and 1911.

By the time of the Diamond Jubilee, agriculture was still in depression, which badly impacted many rural communities. Some of this has been captured by writers of the time such as Thomas Hardy, whose novels give a sense of the feelings of rural folk that their futures had been taken out of their hands, by those with little understanding of the rural way of life.

Against this backdrop, we might imagine, that any reason to celebrate a pride in the country would be seen as a welcome respite. I think that the staff at Wilby Hall, would have been only too pleased to be able to celebrate this momentous occasion in the life of our country.

¹¹ Queen Victoria [Internet]. En.wikipedia.org. 2020 [cited 15 June 2020]. Available from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Victoria#Diamond_Jubilee

¹² Matthew.H. The Liberal Age (1851-1914). The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain. Oxford University Press. 1984