

The Raynhams' Newsletter - April 2024

Dates for the Diary

- Friday 5th, 12th, 19th, 26th - West Raynham Village Hall Bar open from 7 to 10:30pm.
- Saturday 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th - Creative Crafters in Village Hall from 10am to midday.
- Wednesday 10th - Talk on Ancient Jewellery at West Raynham SHQ at 6pm with optional tour beforehand at 5pm.
- Saturday 13th - Open Day at West Raynham Control Tower from 10am to 4pm.
- Sunday 14th - Cold War History Day at West Raynham SHQ.
- Thursday 11th, 18th, 25th - Line dancing in the Village Hall from 7 to 8pm; drop-in sessions cost £6 per person.
- Sunday 21st - First Tractor ride of the season leaving at 9:30 from Mike's yard.
- Friday 26th - Raynhams' Gardening Club meeting in the Village Hall from 6 to 7pm.

Church Services

- Sunday 14th - St Mary's, East Raynham, from 6pm.
- Sunday 21st - All Saints, Helhoughton, from 10:30am.
- Sunday 28th - St Martin's, South Raynham, from 10:30am.

Talk on Ancient Jewellery - Wednesday 10th April

Ken Delve, who leads the West Raynham Station HQ (SHQ) Project at the old West Raynham airbase, will be giving an illustrated talk on very ancient jewellery covering the Egyptian and Babylonian eras. The talk will take place on Wednesday 10th April at 6pm at the airbase (first building on the left on entry), and it will be free of charge, but donations can be given for activities at SHQ. There will be a tour of the building and project activities from 5pm before the talk.

Would anyone interested in attending this event get in touch with me by email at rrbuckeridge@aol.com. It should be really fascinating!

Rowena Buckeridge.

St Margaret's Churchyard

The small flock of Hampshire Down sheep we have hosted in the churchyard this Spring have finished grazing the site and have now been taken back to their 'home' in Sculthorpe. Many thanks to Sophie Middleton for loaning us her animals and we hope to have them back with us in the Autumn. Meanwhile, dog walkers can once again use the churchyard as usual. Many thanks to all for your understanding.

David Stubbs.

Newsletter Contact Details & Past Issues

- westray.newsletter@gmail.com - To send in articles or manage subscriptions.
- <https://www.raynhampc.info/documents> - To download previous Newsletters.
- Recent issues available to view in the Reading Room.

Tractor Runs

The first tractor run of the season starts on Sunday 21st, with tractors leaving at around 9:30am from Mike and Ann's yard, which is at the junction of The Street with Raynham Road. If you would like to reserve a place for the next run in May then please contact Ann Chestney on 07775 514575.

Refuse Collection Days

From 8th April collection days for recycling and household waste are changing from Tuesdays to Fridays. From this month, recycling will be collected on the 12th and 26th, while household refuse will be collected on the 19th. For more information visit:

<https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/tasks/environmental-services/bin-day-changes-2024/>.

Mobile Library

The mobile library service is in West Raynham each month on a Friday from 9:30 to 9:45am, stopping by the bus shelter opposite the Village Hall. Forthcoming dates for the mobile library are:

- Friday 26th April
- Friday 24th May
- Friday 21st June
- Friday 19th July
- Friday 16th August
- Friday 13th September



SID'S QUIZ NIGHT **WEST RAYNHAM VILLAGE HALL**

SATURDAY 18TH MAY 2024

DOORS OPEN 7PM
QUIZ STARTS 7.30PM

BAR & RAFFLE
ALL WELCOME

Teams of 4 People
£5.00 per Team



Contact Sid on – 07889 957491

Easter Bingo - 25th March

Thank you to everyone who donated, helped and attended the Easter Bingo which was a great success!! We raised £331 for the Village Hall funds, and I think it might become an annual event with possibly one for Christmas.



Tracy Jolliffe.

Coffee Morning - 3rd April

Thank you to everyone for making our first coffee morning of the year such a success. Thirty people from around West Raynham, The Orchard and Helhoughton enjoyed good company over tea and coffee, and a variety of sweet and savoury treats, along with a simple quiz which helped break the ice and get everyone talking.

It was generally agreed that this event is something we should consider repeating, and plans are afoot for something similar in June or July - watch this space!



Raynham Beef Boxes

We are delighted to now be offering Raynham Beef Boxes and individual cuts from our herd of Aberdeen Angus.

You can purchase a Beef Box by emailing us at bookings@raynham.co.uk, although products are subject to availability.

Our farming team prioritises the well-being and natural rearing of our cattle. We maintain a pure Aberdeen lineage, and our meticulous approach allows us to maintain optimal herd dynamics, while ensuring the well-being of both mothers and calves.

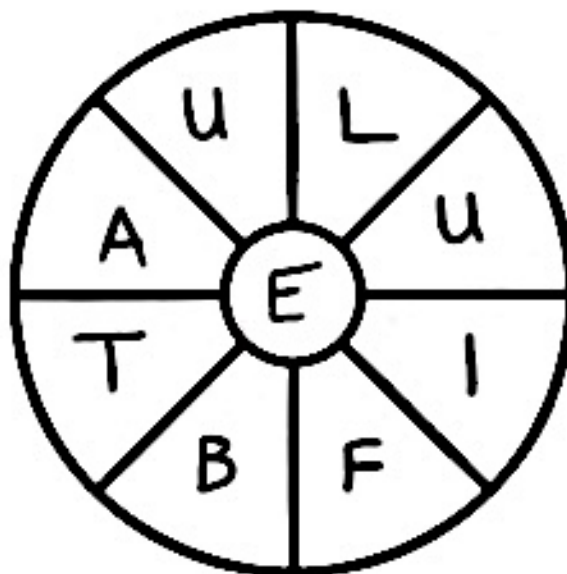


Word Wheel

Find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each word must use the central letter and at least two others. Letters may be used only once. You may not use plurals, foreign words, or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found.

I surprised myself by finding 29 - not including the nine-letter word which is where I started when constructing the wheel; see if you can beat me - I bet there are more words in there that I missed.

The words I found are listed on page 6 and include the nine-letter word - well done if you got that one!



Judy Pell.

March Photo Competition

Thank you to everyone who submitted photos last month and Paula has chosen the following two images for March.



Winner: Bryan Welton



Runner-up: Tracy Jolliffe

Deadline for April photos: by 5pm on Friday 26th

Email your images to westray.newsletter@gmail.com

Details

Photos must be of local relevance and taken during 2023 or 2024. Digital images must be in LANDSCAPE not portrait orientation; be of high resolution (min. 300 dpi); full size (not cropped), and relevant to The Raynhams. Sorry but we cannot accept any printed photographs or images.

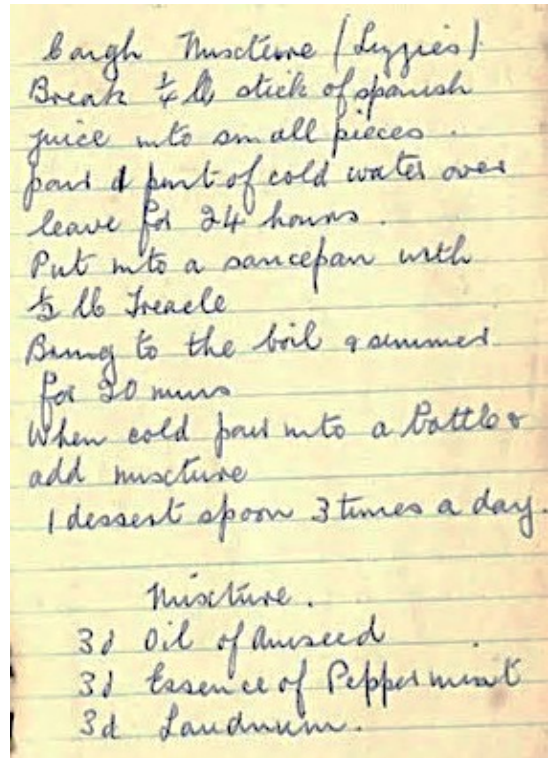
Recipe Corner: Egg Cocktail & Cough Mixture

In the past, recipe books didn't just include favourite recipes exchanged amongst family and friends, but also home remedies and medicines. So, this week I am presenting a little bit of social history from my Auntie Lottie's recipe book: egg cocktail for sustaining invalids during convalescence; and a home-made cough mixture (this is not an April Fools' Day joke).

While the cocktail is reminiscent of a hangover cure, the cough medicine really reflects how different things were in the 1930s and 40s when the recipe was written. Even if you could, this is not one to try at home.

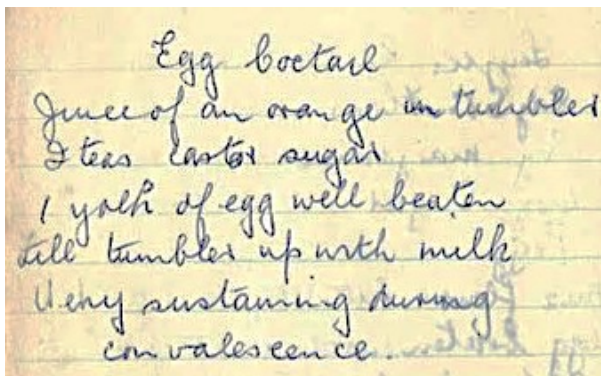
Firstly, I don't know what 'spanish juice' is - if anyone has any ideas, then please let me know.

Secondly, notice one of the final ingredients, laudanum, which is a tincture of opium containing morphine and was used as a narcotic painkiller. Back in the day nobody thought twice about buying this over the counter in a chemist's shop. How things have changed!



Bargh Musclove (Lycopodium)
Break $\frac{1}{2}$ lb stick of spanish
juice into small pieces
part & part of cold water over
leave for 24 hours
Put into a saucepan with
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb Treacle
Bring to the boil & simmer
for 20 mins
When cold put into a bottle &
add mixture
1 dessert spoon 3 times a day.

Mixture.
3d Oil of Aniseed
3d Essence of Peppermint
3d Laudnum.



Egg cocktail
Juice of an orange in tumbler
2 teas castor sugar
1 yolk of egg well beaten
fill tumbler up with milk
Very sustaining during
convalescence.



My Great Aunt Lottie with her brother, my grandfather, and her parents. I'm guessing this must be in the 1930s.

If you have a treasured recipe which you are happy to share, then please contact: westray.newsletter@gmail.com.

Judy Pell.

Word Wheel Answers

Bet, Eat, Elf, Fie, Lea, Let, Lie, Tea, Bale, Bate, Beat, Belt, Bile, Bite, Blue, Feat, Felt, File, Flue, Late, Left, Life, Lute, Tale, Teal, Tile, Tube, Fable, Table. Nine letter word: Beautiful

Rambles with Rosie

Rosie and I love our daily walks and exploring the beautiful Norfolk countryside. This month's ramble is probably my favourite and is definitely Rosie's as she loves the beach. Depending upon how far you wish to walk you can adapt the route to do the shorter or longer version walking as far as Holme beach or even Hunstanton. The Coasthopper bus can be used to travel back to your starting point and allows dogs on board as well! I use the Outdoor Active app which I have on my phone to plan routes rather than carry a paper map (which I am useless at reading anyway!)

Thornham to Holme - 4.7 miles circular route



Directions

Travelling past the Thornham deli on your left, turn right towards the Lifeboat pub but carry straight on at the righthand bend. There is parking on your left further down which gives you direct access to the start of the walk.

Leaving your car, walk up onto the sea wall and follow this as far as the boardwalk. Along the boardwalk are steps on your right which take you across the sand dunes onto the beach. Be careful of the grasses here as they will slice your hand if you grab one!



The sea wall in October but hopefully drier now!



On the beach, please keep dogs away from the roped off areas which are for nesting birds. Turn left and walk along until you reach a gap on your left which takes you off the beach and onto a crossroads of paths. The gap is near the remains of an old-World War II gun emplacement and is marked off with ropes.

Now you have a choice. Turn right and follow the boardwalk to Holme beach which goes past the golf course on your left. I then turn left and walk back past the toilet block turning left again along the quiet road which leads back to the Norfolk Wildlife Trust café.

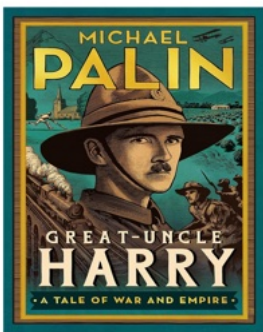
Turn left and pick up the boardwalk which will lead you back to the sea wall and your start point. Straight ahead lies the café with toilet facilities and makes a welcome stop along the route. Be aware of opening times as they do not open until 10.00am daily.

Toilets and refreshments - Norfolk Wildlife Trust café (rustic hobbit huts!) or Holme beach. Plenty of pubs in Thornham as well.

Safety notes - walking alone with Rosie, I always ensure I have a fully charged phone (which also knows where my car is - as does Rosie!), a dog whistle, sensible footwear (walking boots or Muck wellies). Rosie is usually on lead on these walks keeping her and other livestock safe from harm. Most responsible dog owners if they see your dog is on lead will do the same.

Great Uncle Harry - Update

In the March issue, I mentioned Michael Palin's biography of his 'Great Uncle Harry' (Hutchinson Heinemann, 2023). In the book was a reference to Michael Palin's grandfather Dr Edward Palin who lived in Fakenham.



According to Linda Tree in Helhoughton, who has an interest in local history, "Dr Palin lived in Oak Street, and his house and garden was roughly where the library and the bungalow behind it is. The house was the same Georgian style as Drifters fish and chip shop, so they matched. Most of the trees that you see around Fakenham Connect and the Community Centre were in the garden. The house was demolished when they were originally thinking about widening Oak Street. There is an old photo of Oak Street in one of the local history books, which shows Dr Palin driving his car."

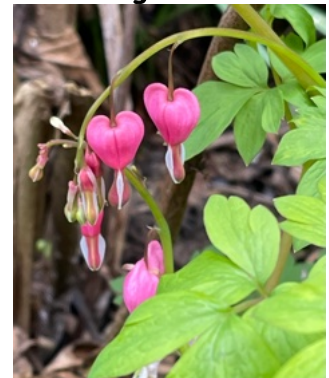
Debbie Lamont.

Some Ideas for Spring Plants for Your Garden

Spring is a wonderful time of the year as the garden explodes into colour after the winter. Wonderful as it is to see the primroses, daffodils and tulips there are many other options to consider, especially if you have shady corners, or underneath large deciduous shrubs which cast shade later in the season. Here are some ideas from plants I have grown over the years. These plants will thrive in a sheltered woody environment that gets some sun, as well as shade, and is perhaps a bit on the damp side - think of the type of place where primroses might grow for example.

Dicentra

There are many varieties of Dicentra, some that come from Asia, (Japan, China, Siberia), and others that come from North America. They have several nicknames including Bleeding Heart, Shorthorn Steers-Head and Dutchman's Breeches! In German it's known as Tearful Heart and I was told the other day it's also known as Lady in the Bath! I grow the Asian variety that I know as



Dicentra spectabilis and its flowers can come in pink, red and white. The plant is about 30cm in height and the flowers grow upwards then hang down drooping in a curve. They are very pretty, look very fragile and grow well in my garden.

Trilliums

These are more unusual plants to grow and need a similar situation as *Dicentra* but look spectacular. There are 50 species to try if you fancy that many! The flowers vary from white to dark purples, but their leaves are very beautiful and marked. I had them in my previous garden in Snowdonia but I'm pretty sure they would grow well in Norfolk given the right aspect and soil.



Erythronium

These plants require a similar type of soil and aspect as the other two plants mentioned, so the three should grow well together. Erythroniums look incredibly fragile and delicate and to some extent they are, but they stand up well to our weather given a bit of shelter. Most Erythroniums come from North America, though six species are from Europe and Asia. They also have numerous nicknames: the Fawn Lily, Trout Lily, Adders Tongue and probably the most common here in the UK, Dogs-tooth Violet! Apparently, the 'dogs-tooth' refers to the shape of the bulb of the plant. The bulb can be used as a root vegetable, either cooked or dried and then ground into flour. The leaves can also be cooked as a vegetable. I have never tried either nor intend to, as I much prefer it as a flower in my garden! So, check the authenticity of Erythronium as a food plant for yourself before trying it!!! It grows well here in Norfolk in the right conditions.



Bryan Welton.

The Plant Stall

I would like to thank everyone for their continued support over the years for the plant stall, from donating pots and plants and importantly buying the plants from the stall. We have raised a substantial amount of money over the years for the Guide Dogs and hope that will continue. All the money raised goes to the Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Expenses for compost, which is now a considerable amount as the stall has expanded, down to the plant labels and pens, are bought from my own money. I put a lot of time into making the stall work, planting up plants ahead of their being put out on the stall, bulking up supply by making cuttings in advance, occasionally seeds too, and then sometimes hours writing out labels trying to give as much info about the plant as I can on a small piece of plastic! I want people to buy from the stall, so I put a lot of effort into getting good plants that, if I saw them on a stall, would want to buy myself.

Until now we have always asked people to give a donation to the stall and, on the whole, people have been very generous, though occasionally I have been aware that not much money has been donated, and in a few cases none at all. We put a metal money box screwed to the stall after the plastic money boxes disappeared in the past. Then last Autumn we found the money box had been wrenched from the stall and whatever money inside was stolen. Subsequently a few plants have been put out over the Winter and Spring and, shall

we say, very little money has been left in the new cash box which is attached to the stall. I am very aware that many people are currently having a very hard time financially, as are of course charities like the Guide Dogs which see their donations dwindling.

So, after a lot of consultations with others in the village I have, reluctantly, decided to put a minimum price for each plant. The hope is that people will give more than the minimum. The price I have worked out is based on the size of the plants, and how many plants are in the pots. Rare plants that I only have a few of may have a higher price too. I have large pots of hardy geraniums which I have priced at £3 but when you look closely you will find two or three plants in each pot so effectively it is £1 a plant which is very good value.

I hope you will continue to support the stall and I am aiming for plenty of plants to be available for the Open Gardens on 23rd June. To that end if you have any spare plants from now on, then please bring them to me for the plant stall. Thank you.

Bryan Welton.

Wesley is Home

After an extended stay at Emma's Hedgehog Hospital in Terrington St Clement's, Wesley has returned to West Raynham and is exploring his old haunts.

You may remember that Wesley was found outside the Methodist Chapel back in September last year. He was very small, alone and out in the daytime so there was clearly something wrong.

We took him to Emma's where they discovered that he weighed just 267g and was suffering with ringworm and lungworm. He was immediately given a special bath and treated for various nasties. It was quite late in the season, and being so small he didn't put on enough weight to see him through hibernation, so he was fostered over winter in Wisbech. He's had quite an adventure.

He had his first taste of freedom in the middle of March when he was released into our garden weighing a very healthy 764g. We have made the garden as hedgehog friendly as we can, with exits in each corner so that he can explore the rest of the village, piles of leaves where he can make himself a nest and a feeding station set up to supplement whatever he can find for himself. We see him now and again and hope that he has found himself a cosy bed nearby.

If you would like to find out more about the work of Emma's Hedgehog Hospital, go to <https://emmashedgehoghospital.com>. This is a non-profit making charity providing a rescue service for injured and sick hedgehogs. Emma herself is a qualified veterinary nurse, so we know that all the hedgehogs get the best possible care, and her veterinary practice is very much involved.

Wesley was the 48th rescued hedgehog to be released by Emma this Spring.

Andrew Howarth.



Moths in Gardens

Buff Tip and Pale Tussock Moths

In early March Rowena Buckeridge gave me two silken cocoons and one 'hard' chrysalis which she had found in her garden. They were either moths or butterflies undergoing the amazing transformation, or metamorphosis, from the caterpillar stage to adults. The chrysalises (pupal stage of Lepidoptera) were placed individually in glass jars containing a wooden perch in each, and left out of direct sunlight at 18-20 degrees Centigrade.



While I was away between 17th to 23rd March, a Buff-tip, *Phalera bucephala*, emerged from the 'hard' chrysalis (3cm in length and 1cm width). Unfortunately, when I noticed it, the adult was very weak and had to be killed (left overnight in a freezer). Adults of *P. bucephala* are normally in flight between May and July and said to resemble a broken birch twig when at rest. The caterpillars feed on broadleaf trees such as birches, sallows and oaks.

On 27th

March a male Pale Tussock moth, *Calliteara pudibunda*, emerged from one of the silken cocoons (3.5cm length and 2.5 cm width). On the 29th, a female *C. pudibunda* emerged from the other cocoon. The two adults were placed together in one container on the 30th, and then released into the garden during the afternoon of the 31st.

Two days later another female *C. pudibunda* emerged from the same cocoon from which the first female moth had appeared. The second female moth was released into the garden on the evening of 5th April. Adult *C. pudibunda* fly between May to June and the caterpillars feed on broadleaved trees and shrubs.



1st female - 29th March



Male - 27th March



2nd female - 2nd April

Bee Moth

Also in early March, Judy and I were handed some matted cocoons by Roger Mundy which he had found between rotting wooden planks. We placed them in a sealed cardboard tube and waited to see if anything emerged. Initially I thought the cocoons may have contained larvae of *Galleria mellonella*, the wax moth, which feeds on honeycomb, wax and honey inside beehives.

Two yellow larvae were seen on 21st March and subsequently adult moths were noticed on 3rd and 4th April and identified as the Bee Moth, *Aphomia sociella*, quite a common species in UK. Female *A. sociella* lay their eggs in the nests of bumblebees and wasps where their larvae feed on debris, pollen and any unprotected bee/ wasp eggs, larvae and pupae that

they can find. Coincidentally, two adult *A. sociella* were recorded in the light trap at Foundry Cottage in June 2023.



Larvae and adult of *Aphomia sociella*

Moth catches at Foundry Cottage

Following on from the summary of moth numbers for 2023 in February's Newsletter, I compared moth catches between 2022 and 2023 and there are several differences in the numbers recorded, some of which might be attributable to prevailing weather conditions (Figure 1; note log₁₀ scale on y-axis):

- Low moth numbers at the start of Spring and Summer in 2023 were very likely due to relatively colder temperatures compared with 2022.
- Very wet and cool weather in early Autumn in 2023 probably led to a steeper drop-off in numbers than in 2022.
- Approximately 100-200 moths were recorded during the Summer months in both years, despite the longer period of hot and dry conditions in 2022.
- Greater numbers of moths during August/September in 2023 is due high numbers of *Noctua pronuba* (Large Yellow Underwing) flying then. The species accounted for 31-48% of all individuals caught at that time.

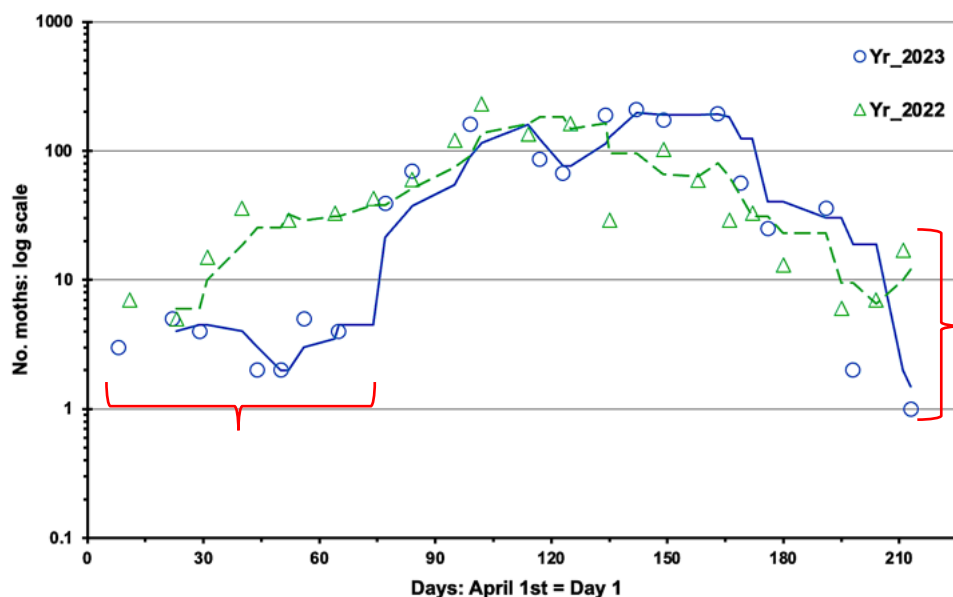


Figure 1. Moth numbers recorded in 2022 (triangles) and 2023 (circles). Trend lines are 4th level moving averages in Microsoft Excel.

Paresh Shah.

Joseph Arch as MP for North-West Norfolk

As Member of Parliament for North-West Norfolk, Arch decided that he should make reform of the land laws his priority. It was an objective the union had campaigned for from the outset. The Labourers Union Chronicle, voicing its grievances over enclosure, had declared in 1874 that 'the commons of England belonged to the peasantry and were stolen by the landlords'. Arch considered the land laws to blame for the depression in agriculture, which had impoverished so many farmworkers and their families and caused tens of thousands of rural labourers to desert the countryside for work in urban areas, or to emigrate overseas for a new life.

In reality, the downturn was largely attributable to the import of cheap wheat from abroad, but Arch saw the large farms as under-cultivated and proposed to Gladstone that they be broken up into smaller units in order for full cultivation to create more work and more food. He wanted the 'feudal fetters' untied to help both the rural and national economy. Briefly supporting nationalisation of the land, he later tempered his view by arguing for relief for labourers impacted by the depression. Land nationalisation, he decided, would take too long to implement to benefit them.

His maiden speech to Parliament came on 26th January 1886, with Arch dressed in his usual tweed suit and billy-cock hat for the occasion. It was a passionate appeal for land reform:

"We do not ask for borrowed funds. We do not ask for the land to be given to us. We have no desire to steal it...What I would ask the House to consider, is that it should use every legitimate means to bring that land that cries for labour and the labourers as soon as possible."

He argued that it was too difficult for labourers to secure allotments in their villages, due to obstacles by farmers and landowners, adding that a large number of his Norfolk farmworkers would be glad to rent an acre or two at fair market prices. His contribution was politely applauded and the amendment he supported, Jesse Collings' so called 'three acres and a cow' clause, led to a defeat for the Conservative government.

In truth, he was unable to achieve anything of significance in his first spell as an MP. In the six months the Parliament lasted, Arch spoke six times in the House, including one supporting Charles Bradlaugh's abortive bill to make cultivation of land compulsory. He also backed Home Rule for Ireland, an issue which dominated the period. By June 1886, the Liberal government, split and in disarray, was defeated as Gladstone sought to progress his Home Rule Bill. Another election loomed.

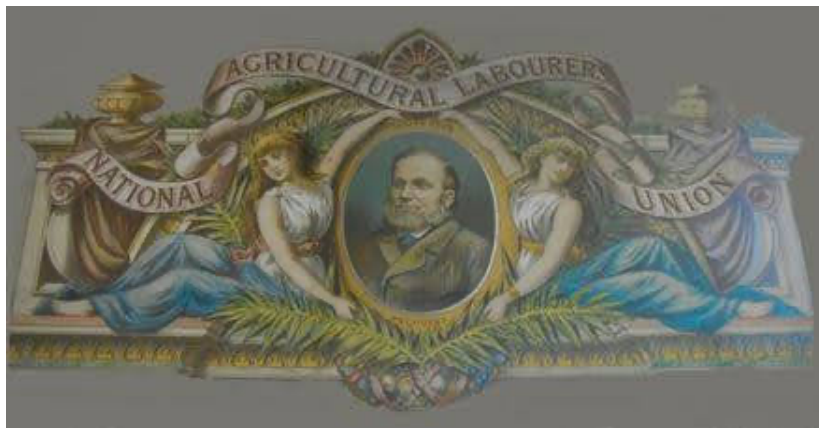
As electioneering resumed in North-West Norfolk, Arch was generally well-received, and there was little dissent at the hustings, aside from some vocal opposition at a meeting at Fakenham Corn Hall. In Rudham, he was greeted by around 300 men and boys "singing a local election ballad to the accompaniment of a drum", whilst at Massingham station half a dozen porters hailed him with "Hurrah ! We're all going for yo!"

There was still intimidation, however, from his opponents. Norfolk union activist and later Labour MP George Edwards recalled attending a meeting where a young farmer rode into the crowd and attempted to hit Arch with his whip-stalk, but Arch's supporters quickly unseated him and ducked him in the nearby pond. On polling day, the Liberal-leaning Norfolk News reported: "Many of the farmers in the division practised the grossest form of intimidation upon the men", quoting an example at Dersingham where a 'squadron' of

farmers surrounded the polling station, threatening any labourers who came to vote with 'serious consequences' if they did not plump for Arch's opponent Lord Bentinck. This continued until Arch himself turned up and "scattered the farmers in all directions." It is difficult to ascertain the real impact of such intimidation, but from the votes cast for Arch at both elections, it is clear that most labourers voted according to their real intentions.

At the count on 9 July, his opponent Bentinck had a majority of 15. Arch ordered a recount, but it only increased Bentinck's majority to 20. Arch told his supporters not to be downhearted. He resolved to return and reclaim the confidence of his fellow labourers. Nationally, the Liberals were roundly defeated, their stance on Ireland a decisive factor. Judgements on the reasons behind Arch's defeat, particularly so soon after his resounding victory, are difficult to make but the Conservatives fully exploited Arch's support for Home Rule. This, along with the Liberal Party's travails, compounded the loss. On voting day, the labourers were busy in the fields, it being high summer, and unlike Bentinck, Arch could not arrange transport for the labourers to the polls. The defeat meant it would be another six years before Arch returned to Parliament.

Nor were the union's fortunes faring any better - membership had fallen to around 10,000 and showed few signs of revival. A succession of poor harvests had served to undermine its strength, many members deserting its ranks after failure to prevent wage reductions. Arch now had more time to devote to the union, and he once more toured the countryside, particularly its East Anglian strongholds, to shore up morale and encourage labourers to sign up.



NALU banner featuring Joseph Arch

At the 1892 general election, Arch was again up against Bentinck in North-West Norfolk. Another July date for the poll might have been ominous for Arch's chances, given the labourers summer workload, but overnight rain meant working in the fields was limited, a circumstance which boosted Arch's campaign. Local support for Arch was as enthusiastic as ever, with large crowds drawn to his meetings, and banners displayed across village streets brandishing his name. Voting levels were high, with the villages of Sculthorpe, Snoring and Toftrees recording almost full turnouts, perhaps explained by the availability of horse-drawn transport for the voters there.

Arch won the contest with a healthy majority of 1,089, his supporters turning out in large numbers to deliver him 4,911 votes. Not everyone was happy with the outcome. The High Sheriff of Norfolk refused to declare the result, leaving the under-Sheriff having to stand in. The High Sheriff then wiped his hand with his handkerchief after reluctantly

shaking Arch's. Unshaken by the rebuff, Arch deliberately shook his hand again, declaring that he was happy with the state of the poll if the High Sheriff was. Arch's supporters were jubilant, lifting him into his customary donkey cart and embarking on a triumphal tour of Kings Lynn. They sang:

"Sound a loud hurrah! Boys
Raise your voices high,
Arch is going to Parliament,
With a grand majority!"

The Conservatives were, as Arch recalled, "completely staggered" at his convincing victory. In 1885, several of the local gentry had lent him horses and carriages to take voters to the polls, but in 1892 "they would not lend me a wheel. They all turned against me because I voted for Home Rule". Addressing the crowd of seven or eight thousand from the balcony of the Liberal Club, and comparing his mode of transport with that of the landowners, Arch claimed: "And now I have stood the test again without the support of any of those gentlemen who have turned out to be Tories, and what has happened? Why, Joseph and his brethren here have licked you into a donkey cart - a glorious licking it is this time too!" Arch knew the importance of his victory and repeated what he had been telling the labourers for years, that their vote was "the only weapon they possess and by properly using it they can outwit the squire, the parson and the land agent, with more effect than by holding arguments."

He was to remain MP for the next eight years, but in truth, Arch's best work was behind him, his contribution as the labourers' figurehead minimal. During this period, Arch made only 12 speeches, mostly on the Local Government Bill of 1893-4 which established parish councils, something Arch himself had argued for. He was particularly keen to ensure council meetings were in the evenings when workers were able to attend. After 1894, though, he made little contribution to Parliamentary matters. He found the long hours tiring, the late sittings frustrating, and was lonely from lengthy periods away from home. Disillusionment also stemmed from his financial predicament, his diary of 1892 revealing debts to family and others. MPs were unpaid until 1911, which undoubtedly made it difficult for the early working-class members such as Arch and the Lib-Labs, as well as the first tranche of Labour Party MPs. There were no expenses or allowances either. Prevailing attitudes were that members would have the means to survive, restricting representation to the wealthy. Arch relied heavily on his wage as President of the union, but as the union's fortunes waned, payments became irregular.

Perhaps more with a sense of duty than genuine enthusiasm, Arch stood again at the 1895 election, increasing his majority to 1,297. The decline of the union, combined with Arch's negative attitude towards labourers who had deserted it, appeared to have no adverse impact. His opponent this time, however, was EKB Tighe, an Irish landowner with no personal connection to Norfolk. The Tories waged another vitriolic campaign against Arch, attempting to exploit the enfeeblement of NALU and its dwindling finances, but the Liberals knew their core vote in the countryside would be resolute.

The Norfolk News of 3rd August 1895 noted that Arch and the Liberals had focussed their campaign on the huge rural area:

"..between Fakenham, Hunstanton and Creake where there are miles upon miles of villages in which the name of Arch is a household word. In many of these places it is literally true that the electors turned out and voted for him by the cartload. One of the vans lent for the occasion brought to the Fakenham polling station at a single journey nearly forty perspiring rustics, who were hanging on to the vehicle in every conceivable attitude."



Caricature of Arch from
Vanity Fair (1886)

Another joyous parade wound its way through Lynn after Arch's victory, with the MP held aloft by his supporters. Arch was to serve in Parliament for another five years. Nationally, the Liberals lost the election, the Conservatives winning a majority of 152 seats.

In contrast to Arch's electoral success, the union he founded became less and less viable. The English Labourers Chronicle had been wound up in 1894, due to a lack of funds, and membership was down to 1,000 and declining. In October 1896, in what must have been a bitter blow to Arch, NALU was dissolved. It was not only a personal catastrophe but a financial one, even his occasional income had now disappeared, and he had a Westminster flat to pay for as well as the upkeep of his Barford cottage, which remained his permanent home. It was not until later in 1896 that, concerned at his situation, his Liberal friends again came to Arch's rescue, setting up a fund amounting to £1200, Gladstone and Lord Rosebery donating £10 each, from which an annuity was bought. His financial circumstances in Parliament were finally secure.

His relations with the Prince of Wales, who of course resided in Arch's constituency at Sandringham, were always cordial, to the point where Arch would proudly declare he was the MP for Sandringham. The Prince sent him two tickets for the opening of the Imperial Institute in 1893 and even visited Arch at his Barford cottage whilst staying at Warwick Castle.

Towards the end of the decade, Arch's health began to suffer and he stood down as an MP in 1900 at the age of 74. He retired to his Warwickshire cottage, where he died in 1919, aged 92. Arch's time as an MP can be summed up as inauspicious, his interventions limited to rural life, and his forceful oratory, once compelling in settings where he had a rapt audience of labourers, strangely bereft of its power in the Parliamentary arena. Nevertheless, he remains a huge figure in the history of the labour movement through his efforts to establish and consolidate the first national union of agricultural labourers. In Norfolk, he was revered as the man who came to emancipate the "white slaves of England."

Phil's book 'Fire in the East - Joseph Arch and the Norfolk labourers' is out now.

Phil Henshaw.