

# The Eighteenth Century

## Politics

The two MP places for rural Norfolk were dominated by the great landowners in the north west of the county. Charles Turner of Kirby Cane was one of the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury and an MP (Kings Lynn) who was often involved in Parliament about South Norfolk matters (Great Yarmouth Harbours, the East Anglian coal trade etc).

Britain was almost constantly at war: wars with France and Spain; the Jacobite rebellions in Scotland; America (1776-1781) and later in the century in India. These had resulted in hardship at home, direct taxes on land, and indirect taxes on windows, horses and hats. The tax on candles, salt and beer especially hit the poor. Men due to be in the Militia for 3 years could hire substitutes. Lincoln Matchett was clearly a broker in this.

## Agriculture

In the century after 1750, the population of England rose by about 10 million, mostly in cities and the small market towns, and agricultural output expanded to keep pace. Advertisements for land show that most of it was already enclosed. Turnips were offered for sale, and taken in tithe. Defoe mentions that store cattle walked down from Scotland were fattened between Norwich and the Waveney. Cabbages were grown for winter animal fodder, the manure used to enrich the soil. Buckwheat, grown on the poorer soil, is a member of the dock and knot grass family. It was fed green to sheep and the seeds were cracked to provide fodder for cows, horses and pigs, allowing greater numbers to be overwintered. Less oxen, as they were gradually replaced by the Suffolk Punch. By the 1790s Norfolk was exporting more grain than the rest of England. The use of machinery on the farm grew at the end of the century (e.g. dressing flour: Ransomes self-sharpening plough). There were hiring fairs held at the Petty Sessions in Loddon. Hemp was a major crop of the Waveney valley with hemp weaving at Diss, though this was on the decline. Hemp was grown in the Waveney Valley by both farmers and cottagers, the fibres sold by sample at Diss, Halesworth, Harleston, Bungay and other nearby market towns. Women and children spun this at home into yarn, bought by manufacturers and woven into Suffolk hempen, but this ancient staple also disappeared by 1830 Hemplands were being given over to corn.

## Entertainment

1785 and 1786 saw the first manned gas balloon flights were made from Quantrell's Gardens in Norwich. Bathing at Bungay. Norwich published its first newspaper. Bungay and Beccles advertised theatres, races and sports.

## Crime

Petty Sessions held for Clavering Hundred at Haddiscoe or Brooke, though Clavering seems to have been amalgamated with Loddon later. A quarter of the criminals apprehended went to the gallows, some were branded or whipped and transportation became an alternative, initially to America, but after American Independence, to West Africa or Australia. Much justice for petty theft was handled by the manor courts or the local officials. Poaching was rife. The Workhouse at Hales (1764) also served as a house of correction for the idle and disorderly by keeping them to hard labour

## Health

John Bucke (1756-1839), surgeon of Ipswich, Bungay and later Mildenhall, was given the body of a murderer to dissect in April 1785. In 1763 Daniel Sutton (whose careful scientific observations resulted in enormous success) set up a house in Toft Monks to inoculate patients with Smallpox, still a major killer and much feared. There seems to have been a large number of medical practitioners working in Beccles and Bungay. Nathaniel Godbold was a confectioner from Bungay, who concocted a "vegetable balsam" to relieve consumption and made a fortune. He built a theatre in Castle Yard, Bungay. 1766 The Workhouse erected a pest house to receive those suffering from smallpox and other infectious diseases. 1728 John King, apothecary set up at cold bathhouse spa in a vineyard at Bungay, and claimed over 40 cures.

## Education

John Leman's School (some places free) and the Fauconberg (grammar) at Beccles, a boarding Grammar school at Bungay. There appears to be no record of a school in Loddon, though private tutors are mentioned. Unitarian minister Michael Maurice took private pupils.

## Religion

Anglican dominance was broken. By the end of the century greater religious diversification was in evidence, though the Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1754 required all nonconformist marriages to take place in Anglican churches except for Jews and Quakers, Congregations of Methodists grew after Wesley preached locally (Loddon and Beccles).

