THE PROFANE AND THE SACRED:
EXPRESSIONS OF BELIEF IN THE DOMESTIC BUILDINGS OF SOUTHERN FENLAND, CIRCA 1500 TO 1700AD

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
University of Leicester

Jonathan Duck BSc (Hons) MSc PgDip IHBC FRSA
Centre for English Local History
University of Leicester
April 2015
ABSTRACT

Historical and cultural geographers have in the recent past argued for a more dynamic and critical geography of architecture and suggested that researchers pay greater attention to domestic architecture and the spaces within the home.

My original contribution to knowledge shows how the home was employed as a vehicle for the permanent expression of private and individual belief, following the English Reformation and over and above the employment of traditional, commissioned and yet more transient decoration. There are no studies of an area’s collective spiritual expressions as witnessed over several hundred years, perhaps due in part to the limited primary documentary evidence available.

I have furthered research into various motifs, and have forwarded two new theories. I have shown that the salt niche was used for ritual storage rather than simply for foodstuffs, and that a ‘spiritual frequency’ was generated within the home for protection and to enable a closer association with God.

The geographical area of study has been chosen not least because of the apparent lack of attention paid to the county by vernacular architectural historians in the recent past which lies in the architectural shadow of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.

The research looks at a selection of houses from various parishes to the north and east of Cambridge, plus several other East Anglian properties, for contextual purposes.

An interdisciplinary approach, the analysis considers elements of architectural history, buildings archaeology, art history and social geography and employs documentary and micro-historical analysis.

The investigation concludes at a time when the gathering pace of the Enlightenment meant less religious turmoil, greater levels of urbanity and scientific discovery, and the arguable coeval reduction in the belief, practice and resultant manifestations of village lore.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research is the result of several years of thinking on the strange, often seemingly meaningless markings that I spent my time contemplating, whilst visiting various people’s homes in my role as a conservation officer.

I would like to thank primarily my wife, Joy, for supporting me through these last several years of academic strife, and for asking questions and pointing out obvious errors in common sense. I continue to learn, and now promise to do the washing up.

I would also like to thank my supervisors at the University of Leicester, Dr Andrew Hopper from the Centre for English Local History, Professor Sarah Tarlow from the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, Professor Keith Snell, also from the Centre for English Local History and Dr Rebecca Madgin from the Centre for Urban History for their guidance, insights and experience, and a belief in what I was doing, and where I was going. Thank you all very much. I could not have done it without you! My grateful thanks also go to the following:-

- Professor Alan McFarlane and Sarah Jardine, friendly neighbours who happen to know more than most about local history, witchcraft and anthropology. The use of their library and the ability to pop next door to ask the odd question over several years has been very much appreciated.

- John Dean for being supportive through the early stages of my work, and for asking good questions, pointing me in various directions and showing me what good vernacular architectural research should look like. His generosity with both his time and his research is a great example.

- Dr Robert Whiting, mediaeval historian, advisor and friend, who helped me to understand the world in which the people of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries lived, and for generously offering his time and expertise.

- Linda Hall, expert vernacular historian and taker of many photographs, for her pictures, correspondence and advice.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to all the residents whose homes I visited – some on several occasions – and for allowing me to use the photographs contained within this work. For reasons of privacy I have not mentioned individuals by name, but you know who you are…. though having said that, special thanks go to Adam, Colleen and Rebecca.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I would like to offer my grateful thanks to all the academics I engaged in correspondence, staff at Leicester University Library, Cambridgeshire County Record Office, University of Cambridge Library and Gonville and Caius Library, as well as Gillian Stapleton, costume historian, Timothy Easton and Beth Davies, local historians, the Vernacular Architecture Group and Patrick Gordon, computer guru. THANK YOU ALL.
CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, CONVENTIONS AND GLOSSARY

LIST OF TABLES, ILLUSTRATIONS AND PLATES

INTRODUCTION 1

The Sample 3

The Vocal Metaphor 5

Why is the Research Needed? 7

Research Aims and Questions 8

Why Cambridgeshire? 11

Architecture

Trade 13

People and Religion 14

The Background 15

Secular Sanctuary and Sacred Space

The Domestic Chapel 18

Domestic Symbolism and Plan Form 19

Function, Fashion and Belief 21

Indistinctions and Divisions 21

Contexts – Political and Social 23

Contexts – Domestic Spiritual 26

Contexts – Witchcraft and Demonology 28

The End of an Era 30
## CONTENTS

### HISTORIOGRAPHY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defining Belief</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Muddied Holy Waters of Superstition and Religion</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space, Segregation and Spirituality</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objects and Materials</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PART 1

### PROJECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wood Carving</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottisham Place</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning and Expression</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnes Hassell</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hassell</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Putti</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Life</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Defacement of John and Agnes</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Family of Love</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Dowsing</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will of John Hassell the Elder</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraudulent Coat of Arms</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papering Over the Cracks</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hall, Station Road, Waterbeach</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>333 High Street, Cottenham</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest’s House, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PROJECTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salt Niches</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sample Group</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireside Activity</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage and Use</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt – Symbolism and Ceremony</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Domestic Inventory</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Glimmer of Hope</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt – The Reduction in Status</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Storage</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Illuminated Display of Goods</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Shapes</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square and Shallow</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diminutive</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decorated</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Face of it</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Repositories</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Witches and the Devil</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Burns</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Average Burn</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows and Doors</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Frequency</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART 3

### INTROVERSION

#### Graffiti

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Research</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crucifix</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjoined Letters</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy Wheel</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stylised Cross</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Composite Talisman</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### INTROVERSION

#### Concealed Objects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Research</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baldwin Manor, High Street, Swaffham Prior</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Implements</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTENTS</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 Denmark Road, Cottenham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Cupboard</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>333 High Street, Cottenham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Button</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Token</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing Card</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages from the Bible</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermin</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCLUSIONS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Major Contribution</strong></td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magic and Religion</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholicism and Protestantism</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Architecture</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Spatial Arrangement of Expressions</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Vocal Metaphor</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual Frequency</strong></td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niches</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taper Burns</strong></td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graffiti</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concealment</strong></td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where Now?</strong></td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# CONTENTS

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>237 – 272</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Titel</th>
<th>Seite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Photographs of all recesses with dimensions.</td>
<td>273 - 285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Table. Dimensions of niches in and around fireplaces.</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Table. Distribution of taper burns and incidence of ‘salt niches.’</td>
<td>287 - 288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Illustration. Location of taper burns on bresummers.</td>
<td>289 - 313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Table. Distribution of properties with tapers and their proximity to their parish church.</td>
<td>314 - 316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Maps. Spatial relationship between properties and their parish church.</td>
<td>317 - 330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Photograph. Brick with graffiti and 666.</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Photograph. Text graffiti from seventeenth century.</td>
<td>332 – 333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Plate. Prophecies in Cottenham parish register from 1620s.</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES, ILLUSTRATIONS AND PLATES

TABLES

1. The number of listed buildings in the research area described as ‘house.’
2. The sample group. Location and frequency of recesses in properties.
3. Distribution graph indicating frequency of taper burns and proximity of the property from church.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Map of contemporary county of Cambridgeshire with surrounding counties.
2. Map of research parishes within the historic county of Cambridgeshire.
3. Planform of Bottisham Place, High Street, Bottisham.
4. Planform of Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton.
5. Planform of The Hall, Station Road, Waterbeach.
6. Planform of 333 High Street, Cottenham.
7. Planform of Priest’s House, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck.
8  Planform of 120 High Street, Cottenham.

9  Planform of Lordship Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck.


11 Planform of Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling.

12 Section through chimney at Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling.

13 Planform of Stoakes and Lime Tree Cottage, Church Street, Wetherden.

14 Planform of 135 High Street, Cottenham.

15 Planform of Manor House, Church Road, Battisford.

16 Planform of Bolebec Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck.

17 Planform of Nine Chimney House, Nine Chimney Lane, Balsham.

18 Planform of Baldwin Manor, High Street, Swaffham Prior.

19 Section through 60 Denmark Road, Cottenham.

20 Planform of 333 High Street, Cottenham.

21 Illustration of fireplace niches at undisclosed location Suffolk.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLATES</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a, 1b</td>
<td>Portrait roundels of Agnes and John Hasell, Bottisham Place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Panelling at Bottisham Place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a, 3b</td>
<td>Carved putti and linenfold, Bottisham Place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4, 5</td>
<td>Fireplace surround, Anglesey Abbey, Lode and Portrait surround detail, Bottisham Place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fixings on panelling, Bottisham Place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7a, 7b</td>
<td>Portrait roundels, Home Farm, Fen Ditton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fireplace, Home Farm, Fen Ditton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Carved decoration, Home Farm, Fen Ditton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10, 11</td>
<td>Detail of carving, Home Farm Fen Ditton and detail of carving, unknown property, Great Yarmouth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Carved decoration, The Hall, Waterbeach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Carved caryatid, 333 High Street, Cottenham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Portrait carving, Priest’s House, High Street, Swaffham Prior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15, 16</td>
<td>Carved bresummer details, Baldwin Manor, High Street, Swaffham Prior and 20 High Street, Burwell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17, 18</td>
<td>Corner post and The Angel Inn, Needham Market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Image Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Wig cupboard, 99 High Street, Sharnbrook.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>High level stave windows, Eye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Early seventeenth-century window, 85 High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22, 23</td>
<td>Fireplace, Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling and The Old Swan, High Street, Elstow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24, 25</td>
<td>Fireplace, Home Farm, High Street, Fen Ditton and niches, Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26a, 26b</td>
<td>Recesses, Priest’s House, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck and Newnham Farmhouse, Low Road, Burwell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27a, 27b</td>
<td>Recess and cottage, 2 High Street, Willingham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28, 29</td>
<td>Fireplace, 120 High Street, Cottenham and recess, Swaffham Bulbeck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30a, 30b</td>
<td>Fireplace and recess, Conduit House, The Green West, Long Melford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30c</td>
<td>Chamber over hall, Conduit House, The Green West, Long Melford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31, 32</td>
<td>Recesses, Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling and The Old Swan, High Street, Elstow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plates</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 - 35 Recesses, 78 High Street, Bottisham, White Roses, Reach and Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling.</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36, 37 Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling and Donington le Heath Manor, Coalville.</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38 Chimney flue, Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling.</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39 Recess, 15 Horse Street, Chipping Sodbury.</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40, 41 Recesses, Bandinel Farm and Les Benitiers, Channel Isles.</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42, 43 Recesses, Les Augres, and Les Aix, Channel Isles.</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44 Squint, Kimpton Manor.</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 Squint, Edzell Castle.</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 Church of All Saints, Burnham Thorpe.</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47 Brueghel’s ‘The Alchemist.’</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 Taper burns on church door, Cambridgeshire.</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49a, 49b Inscriptions, Huntsman and Hounds Cottage, The Street, Metfield.</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49c, 49d Burns and graffiti, Huntsman and Hounds Cottage, The Street, Metfield.</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50a, 50b Stoakes and Limetree Cottage, Church Street, Wetherden.</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLATES

51, 52 Angled taper burns, Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling and Huntsman and Hounds Cottage, The Street, Metfield. 153

53, 54 Cracked bresummers, Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling and White Roses, Reach. 153

55 Author and Fireplace, Manor Farmhouse, Bolnhurst. 155

56a, 56b Fireplace and taper burn, 333 High Street, Cottenham. 156

57 Taper burns, 11-12 The Causeway, Godmanchester. 162

58, 59 Taper burns, Thatched Cottage, The Street, Kirtling and fireplace, detached kitchen, Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton. 164

60 - 62 Taper burns to stave windows, Newnham Farmhouse, Low Road, Burwell, Manor House, Church Road, Battisford and 85 High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck. 165

63a, 63b Taper burns to stave windows, Manor House, Church Road, Battisford. 167

64 Carved crucifix, Bolebec Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck. 174

65a - 65c Fireplace, graffiti and taper burns, 19 Greenside, Waterbeach. 177

66 Graffito, Ely Cathedral. 179
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLATES</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>67a, 67b</td>
<td>Graffiti, Anglesey Abbey, Lode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Attenuated cross, Denny Abbey, Waterbeach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Daisy wheel on bresummer, 22 High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70a, 70b</td>
<td>Daisy wheels and taper burn, 11 – 12 The Causeway, Godmanchester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>Daisy wheels, Belstead Hall barn ceiling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72a, 72b</td>
<td>Graffito and door handle decoration, Anglesey Abbey, Lode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>Musical score by Thomas Tresham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Carved crucifix, Nine Chimney House, Nine Chimney Lane, Balsham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75a – 75c</td>
<td>Secret cupboard door above landing, 60 Denmark Road, Cottenham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Site of concealment of button, 333 High Street, Cottenham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>Baptismal garment button and note, 333 High Street, Cottenham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78a, 78b</td>
<td>Variations in Thomas Dowsing’s handwriting, 333 High Street, Cottenham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLATES</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79a, 79b Jetton from Nuremburg, c.1620-1635, 333 High Street, Cottenham.</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80, 81 Playing card c.1680, 333 High Street, Cottenham and other.</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82a, 82b Pages from the Book of Judges and Joshua, 333 High Street, Cottenham.</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83a, 83b Rat and mice skeletons, 333 High Street, Cottenham.</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84 Incised crucifix, Bedfield parish church, Suffolk.</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, CONVENTIONS AND GLOSSARY

Abbreviations

CCCC – Corpus Christ College, Cambridge
CRO - County Records Office
CUL - Cambridge University Library
DCGP - Deliberately Concealed Garments Project
EH - English Heritage
G&C - Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge
TNA – The National Archives. Previously PRO - Public Records Office
RCHM - Royal Commission for Historic Monuments
VAG - Vernacular Architecture Group
VCH - Victoria County History

Conventions

In order to meet the requirements of the University of Leicester Ethics Committee, the properties studied here have been identified by parish and number, though a list of properties ascribed their full addresses are contained within the detached Bibliography Primary Sources.

I have employed *italics* to emphasize particular points, and in referencing book titles.

The North arrow on all house plans is illustrated thus: North is at the tip of the arrow.

Room Nomenclature

The names adopted in the study will be those applied during the early modern period. The most significant room on the ground floor was known as the hall, whilst the parlour tended to be of similar floor area but was traditionally used more often by members of the family to talk and sometimes to sleep, though there is evidence that it was also used
to conduct business. The hall generally featured the main fireplace in the house. The kitchen, pantry and buttery are secondary rooms, mentioned only infrequently. Bedrooms are traditionally termed chambers.

References

Where a publication is produced in more than one location, the major city – or the British one - will be cited.

Language

Quotes taken from original documents have not been modernised. Square parentheses signify the inclusion into the quote of a word by the author for the sake of clarity. Round parentheses are applied in the usual way.

Glossary


Bresummer – the timber lintel forming the horizontal surround to an inglenook fireplace.

Caryatid – In architecture, a pillar or pilaster in the form of a female figure, supporting on her head an entablature or other horizontal moulded detail.

Hexafoil, daisy wheel or triquetra – a geometric flower-shaped pattern incised in timber using a set of compasses.

Inglenook – a large, early modern fireplace in which individuals could sit either side, immediately adjacent to the fire.

Spandrel – in architecture, the shoulders between a vertical doorframe and transverse member above.

Taper burn – a burn made on a structural timber through the prolonged attention of a taper or candle.
INTRODUCTION

While the home has long been considered a man’s castle, and was described as such by the Chief Justice, Edward Coke in the early seventeenth century, it is argued here that it was also his personal church and a means to enable spiritual dialogue, allowing him to commune with the world beyond.

The major theme of this research, and its contribution to knowledge, is in furthering current understanding of the sacred use of domestic secular or profane space in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the context of religious and household change. Essentially, religion and daily life shared the same, domestic space. To begin with, evidence is gathered through analysis of a range of commissioned pieces, designed for display. However, as the thesis progresses so the expressions become generated predominantly by the householder. The dwellings are vernacular in material and appearance and predominantly those of yeomen and newly emergent gentlemen whose status and religious affiliations were issues to be expressed. This research intends to explore the reasons why people deemed it necessary to express themselves in the confines of their homes, in sometimes quite particular locations, why the expressions took their individual forms and what the meanings encoded within them articulated. I will show how a discrete range of motifs were employed, and how their employment has enabled me to see into the world of individual and private belief – which is an area little explored to date.

Geographically the research focuses on the parishes on the fenland edge to the north of Cambridge, and looks at the years circa 1500 to 1700, a period from which sufficient properties remain extant, which has helped to inform a robust yet discrete study.

---

Illustration 1 shows the contemporary county boundary for Cambridgeshire, with adjoining counties. The parishes in which domestic properties were studied are shown as solid red dots, while the red circles refer to other forms of evidence used within the research.

Illustration 2. The parishes included in the study are shown clustered to the north and east of Cambridge, in this map of the county which excludes Huntingdonshire and the Isle of Ely. Gamlingay and Kirtling, located in the far east and far west of the county, and Balsham, are also shown.
It is intended that the historiography will be advanced through an academic combination of social, architectural, art and religious historical study. Nevertheless, a challenge lies in tying the various archaeological observations of material practice, for which there are no written records, to well-documented religious changes.

The Sample

Of the more than 500 listed buildings in the fen edge parishes under review it was found that over 290 were described as houses by English Heritage in their list descriptions. I intended to analyse in excess of 10% of these properties to create a robust sample. However, no claims of being representative of the historic building stock are being made, because many of the properties from the sixteenth to the start of the eighteenth century have disappeared. Fire, ‘that most grievous scourge’ destroyed many buildings. Whilst the highest number of fires recorded occurred beyond our period, in the years between 1720 and 1750, some settlements throughout early modern history were so affected that they did not recover, and their markets were forced to relocate.

The record is imperfect, but during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Bottisham alone, three fires destroyed a total of 44 dwellings. In Swaffham Prior in the early eighteenth century a fire destroyed 23 houses, while in Swavesey fires usually destroyed three to four homes at a time, and occurred approximately every three to four years. Fire was often seen as a judgement from God. Further afield, in Dorchester in Dorset a great fire in 1613 was perceived to be a message direct from Heaven to the

---

2 For instance, in June 2012 Cottenham contained 69 listed buildings, of which 59 were houses; Burwell had 61 listed buildings, 43 of which were residential; and Willingham featured 31 listed buildings with 25 being described as houses. No claims are made that the volume of listed buildings, or the frequency of residential structures within that list, represents the median across either East Anglia or the country as a whole.
4 Ibid., p. 51.
godly, to transform the disorderly nature of their town. So, when it comes to assumptions concerning rates of survival, caution is required. Sarah Pearson’s analysis of Kentish farmhouses showed that the survival of medieval dwellings was far from random. Of the 60 parishes and approximately 400 houses that she looked at, she noted that it was enough to suggest there were substantial variations in the patterns of remaining dwellings across the county, where fashion and culture as much as other influences played their part.

The English Heritage list descriptions and Royal Commission volumes formed the basis for the research sample, and it was only those properties described as a house and which appeared to feature something of relevance to the thesis, for instance the mention of detailed decoration on a fireplace bressummer – or, those of a particularly early date and which described a significant degree of historic fabric – which were selected. Of the initial 290 dwellings within the category, the number was reduced to 81, and letters duly posted.

Table 1 illustrates the number of listed buildings in the research area described as ‘house’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>No. of listed buildings</th>
<th>No. containing possible accommodation</th>
<th>No. described as 'house'</th>
<th>% described as 'house'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottisham</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottenham</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>85.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen Ditton</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen Drayton</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenstanton</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>81.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lode *</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>66.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterbeach</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingham</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total           | 514                     | 378                                    | 317                      | 61.7% *(70.1% excluding Lode) |

---

* The number of individually listed statues in the grounds of Anglesey Abbey distorts the figures.

Of the 81 dwellings the owners of 40 permitted me access and, of those, 33 formed the basis of the research. The seven which did not make the final cut had either been substantially altered or exhibited neither motifs nor niches.

To illustrate that the motifs, and therefore the practices, were in no way discrete to the southern fen, dwellings from a wider context were also considered. First, to show that the practices occurred in other parts of Cambridgeshire, five dwellings from the east, south and west were selected on the same basis as above. Secondly, because the neighbouring county of Suffolk was a late adherent to Protestantism - which might imply a different rate of domestic ritual application - and in order to offer a regional comparison, four dwellings from that county were also chosen. To the west of the county boundary, three dwellings from Bedfordshire were selected and finally, due to the involvement of two historians from the Channel Isles in the study of niches – which is evidently an uncommon line of enquiry - four properties from the Isles were also included. Further contextual evidence has been provided through documents from Hertfordshire, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk.

It is accepted that there is sample bias and a potential for unrepresentative evidence. However, a porous study area is required in order to broaden and strengthen the evidential base though in so doing, the coherence of a local study is partially, if understandably, diluted.

**The Vocal Metaphor**

Following the sub-section entitled Research Aims and Questions, the work is divided into three areas of research and, given the fundamentally expressive nature of the manifestations, the metaphor used to define those areas is the voice, and its varied application in response to particular circumstances. This metaphor has been adopted to reflect the everyday experience of individuals communicating with one another, where the visual and audible combine to impart the tone and content of a message. Its
contribution is in its simplicity. Verbal nuances are perhaps sometimes overlooked, but the tone of a message is fundamental to its meaning. However, in oral communication words that have been spoken cannot be retrieved, but the forms of dialogue (or motif) generated here, and subsequently revisited by the individual, were ever-ready, so that each time a devotee addressed the motif, the conversation began anew.

Part 1 of the research is entitled ‘Projection’, and consists of two chapters which relate to the employment of relief carvings and recesses situated in and around hall and parlour fireplaces, expressions displayed within the most open, formal rooms on the ground floor of the house. The hall and parlour are considered the least private spaces of the home, by virtue of the range of people who used them. In terms of the vocal metaphor, the voice is used here in general conversation with a requirement neither to shout nor whisper. This standing conversation is sufficiently audible to enable a range of individuals to listen to, to become involved with, and to understand the importance and meaning of, with little concern for causing offence.

Part 2 concerns ‘Transition’, and explores the application of taper burns within both the least and most private spaces in the home. Expressions and thoughts are fundamentally idiosyncratic and as such the research explores a variety of meanings. Vocally, a transitional state is reflective of a slightly hushed tone, in which certain elements of the information are considered more inflammatory than in the previous chapters, which means some of it must be conveyed in a more cautious fashion.

Part 3 consists of two chapters, and is entitled ‘Introversion’. These chapters involve expression generated in the most private spaces, traditionally located on the first floor, though not uniquely, where few individuals were present at the time of the application, or were aware of its subsequent existence. They consider the creation of graffiti and the concealment of various pseudo-sacred objects. The degree of confidentiality required to express these meanings was directly reflective of the gravity of the message and thus, an intimate form of correspondence amplified the quality of connection forged between

---

8 Whilst ‘hall’ and ‘parlour’ are the most common early modern terms for these rooms, ‘soller’ is used on occasion, as in the inventory of Edward Smith from Over, whose will was proved in August 1658. Cambridgeshire CRO, Ely Bonds and Inventories. Spool no. 2301111; 437.
applicant and recipient. Vocally, the activity is therefore described as a whisper or a prayer.

An underlying theme in the structure which links the research chapters and by association the various spaces of the home, is the degree of openness of the property, and its gradual enclosure to create segregated rooms, as considered by Matthew Johnson, whose work is discussed later. Whilst each chapter is discrete, there is an inescapable observation that in several instances particular manifestations have transgressed these artificial boundaries, reflective of their varied, idiosyncratic meanings, and the slow, erratic but inexorable closure of the home.

Why is the research needed?

The research is needed for three reasons. Firstly, whilst the disciplines of archaeology and history have considered particular aspects of the foregoing, they have as yet to produce a comprehensive analysis of domestic belief, particularly in regard to its permanent expression within the early modern home. Examples studied here were commissioned or, more commonly applied by, the householder, perhaps in combination with the more formal, but nevertheless more transient forms of decoration.9 The approach adopted here is termed ‘contextual archaeology’ as it considers how the objects and motifs operated within their physical and metaphysical environments.10

Secondly, research is needed to help further understanding of idiosyncratic decoration and its role in life in the early modern period. Whilst historians such as Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson have assessed the implications of employing religious but ephemeral décor within the home, motifs applied to the very bones of a property have been little studied, and are argued to represent longer lasting, perhaps more profound beliefs which individuals were content to re-adopt and adapt with time and as attitudes

---

and doctrine changed. Mundane domestic activities are inextricably linked to belief through ritual. In their analysis of the choreography of the home, Hamling and Richardson stated that ‘the household in its fullest sense, as that conjunction of material and cognitive elements…. only ever exists as “performed”, when the space and objects are used by individuals going about domestic activities’,11 while Joanna Bruck emphasized that ritual should not be considered illogical or detached from everyday activity, but that such activity was inherently linked to a belief system.12 Bruck’s phrase sums up my view, and is a fundamental theme which drives the research.

The third reason that this theoretical research is required is as a response to the substantial body of archaeological evidence already in existence, concerning analysis of the planform of the home. Matthew Johnson noted that such research was necessary because academic developments had failed to keep up with the corpus of empirical work.13 In this regard, I shall therefore be forwarding new theory.

**Research Aims and Questions**

Euan Cameron argued that up until at least the mid eighteenth century most people in Europe believed that the cosmos was full of meaning, and therefore that rituals could have led to some form of physical transformation.14 This observation is fundamental to the research which will attempt to show how and why individual manifestations were employed. Is there evidence that expressions were created in an optimistic or pessimistic frame of mind as a form of celebration, or to serve as an amulet for protection? Did some expressions serve as both? Did individuals reveal their thoughts and concerns to the Church as overseer of spiritual life, or to their peers, their family, or simply to themselves and their god? The research interprets the evidence and through

---

glimpses of the lives of several parishioners extrapolates in order to contribute to the existing social histories of the area.\textsuperscript{15}

The statements that ‘cultures can only draw a sharp divide between the public and the private if they have a strong sense of the individual in the first place’ and that ‘such a strong sense did not necessarily exist during the period 1400-1600’ are examined.\textsuperscript{16} It is an aim of this research to demonstrate that the division of public and private realms during the early modern period was sufficiently explicit and collectively understood to enable the manifestations considered here, suggesting the sense of the individual was perhaps stronger than might otherwise be assumed.

No primary documentary evidence has been discovered to explain or justify any of these particular forms of expression, but the use of documentary evidence to draft a general picture of early modern families helps to contextualise the lives of a handful of residents. Ames considered written evidence a valuable resource in itself, but believed that it might more usefully be seen as a manifestation in parallel to material culture, recording cultural activity in an alternative medium, rather than as an obvious route to the analysis of the physical world.\textsuperscript{17} A similarly cautious observation was made by Henry Glassie who stated that ‘The dangers of interpreting from artifact back through behaviour to culture are obvious, but it is the best means we have; we will never understand the eighteenth century [or any other] if we read only books’.\textsuperscript{18} James Deetz however struck a more conciliatory note when he stated that artefact evidence was complementary to, and mutually supportive of, documentary evidence,\textsuperscript{19} an observation which resonates with the approach taken in my research.

\textsuperscript{17} Ames ‘Meaning in artifacts’, pp.240-260.
\textsuperscript{19} Deetz, \textit{In Small Things Forgotten}, p.158.
Another aim of the research was to analyse in forensic detail several individual objects in a way that Christopher Marsh, Giovanni Levi and Carlo Ginzburg would recognise.\(^{20}\) It is contested that by reducing the scale of observation to the particular, a more realistic account of life in the past might be described, and factors that may previously have gone unnoticed have been exposed. Glassie stated that items manufactured by the individual revealed something of their cultural life and whilst ideas cannot be enumerated, ‘deep play with components…can venture near a mind’s activities and a maker’s intent’.\(^{21}\) Such play with the current motifs has helped to reveal idiosyncratic intent within a broader framework of collective understanding.

I will also show that domestic space enabled religious practice. Protestant commentators sought to ensure that people prayed on a regular and constant basis throughout the day,\(^{22}\) and while some lay devotees pilgrimaged many miles to obtain spiritual assistance, others were equally ready to pray before an icon at home.\(^{23}\) However, I contend that personal spirituality was also expressed in other, less defined, perhaps more errant ways, in contravention of orthodoxy. The reciprocal nature of thought and action, expressed specifically within the domestic realm, is a fundamental theme running through my research.

Locations in which the veil between Heaven and earth was thinnest were traditionally considered to be those wild and remote places in Celtic legend, such as Iona or Croagh Patrick,\(^{24}\) but my research will illustrate that individuals created thin places within their homes, through which individual proximity to God was at its closest and thus, its most effectual.

By the early modern period the village church was the second most well-known building in the life of many individuals. Folklore and magical belief beyond Catholic


\(^{22}\) Hamling and Richardson, ‘Religious ritual and routine work’, p.2.


\(^{24}\) In separate discussions with Alexandra Walsham and spiritual direction course leader, Heather Boyd, Cambridge. January and June, 2013.
orthodoxy, perhaps learned or reinforced in church, whether formally through teaching, or surreptitiously via peers, was brought into the domestic realm, sometimes in order to help the individual attain greater closeness to God. The manifestations generated were an affirmation of that belief, a form of didactic reminder, and a symbol to oversee and protect. However, belief was also expressed within the home as a way of informing others of the association of the occupants with, and reverence for Mary, God and/or the magical world around them.25

Hamling considered that religious imagery was not incompatible with Protestant faith, but rather that it was a synthesis of old and new iconographies. ‘Traditional religious imagery is not avoided, censored or replaced; instead, it is cast in a supporting role to the central message of Protestant supremacy’.26 This adoption of a bundle of sometimes borrowed practices, acting in a secondary role by those with a varied orthodoxy, is another fundamental theme running through this work. Such diverse belief is witnessed even within early modern exegesis, where there was a great debate between theologians over biblical meaning.27

**Why Cambridgeshire?**

**Architecture**

The county of Cambridgeshire has been only relatively lightly assessed in regard to its vernacular buildings, perhaps partly because it lies in the architectural shadow of Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, three of the most well researched counties in England. A direct comparison with these three might be considered to reflect poorly, and might also be considered to be unfair.28 There are currently vernacular architectural history groups in

---

25 In the post-Reformation period, this need to express religious dogma was literally spelt out, in the form of written decoration upon the walls of the home. See Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*.  
26 Ibid., p.3.  
28 See *Vernacular Architecture* (York, 1952-2012) which highlights the prolific attention paid to the three counties in East Anglia, whose timber framed buildings have been scrutinized as part of the work of the VAG amongst others, for many decades. As far as the VAG is concerned, the bibliographies, volumes III and IV, from 1977-1989 and 1990-1994 discuss Cambridgeshire explicitly in 17 and 21 articles respectively. These equate, across the East of England – which for the purposes of the VAG include
each of these three adjacent counties, but none in Cambridgeshire. Nevertheless, there are archaeological bodies both allied to and independent of the University, and many local history groups, as well as the Cambridge Records Society and the Antiquarian Society, but a county-wide vernacular architectural history group does not exist.

This part of the county was chosen because it forms the interface between the architectural politeness of Cambridge to the south, where fashion and design awareness was ever more expressed than on the fen edge, and the literal backwater of the true fen to the immediate north, only interrupted by the city of Ely. In noting the marked improvement in the quality of domestic construction during the period, the sixteenth-century commentator William Harrison commented that ‘in old time the houses of the Britons were slightly set up with a few posts and many raddles, with stable and offices all under one roof, the like of which is almost to be seen in the fenny countries…unto this day’. Anthony Parker and Denis Pye stated that the renaissance had little impact upon the domestic architecture of the fen, which they felt was hardly surprising ‘in view of the reluctance with which the new ideas were accepted in Cambridge itself’. Notwithstanding the potential architectural lethargy observed during the renaissance, Nikolaus Pevsner stated that the Gothic Revival arrived quite early in Cambridgeshire. He was however similarly underwhelmed by the architecture of the fen: ‘It is not surprising to find that – except for the special case of Cambridge University – it has no marked architectural character of its own and is affected by the styles of the surrounding regions’. In a simple parallel, it is this easy architectural influence, reflected in the motifs applied here and in the adjoining counties which is suggestive of a common, perhaps universal, search for faith beyond borders both geographical and psychological, which helps articulate and define the current research.

The county might also be considered an interface between the east midlands to the west and north-west, in which stone was equally used in construction as timber, and East...
Anglia in which timber, flint and latterly red brick was used almost exclusively. Indeed, Thomas Atkinson stated that ‘Cambridgeshire is very much influenced by geography in the existence of the fens and in having architecturally powerful neighbours to east and west’.

Trade

An interface is also seen in regard to trade. The east midlands perhaps traded more so with the north, south and west, due in part to the Great North Road and the waterways through the hinterland, whilst East Anglia turned north-east and south-east and traded with London, Norwich and the Low Countries, largely aided by the flow of its rivers and the road system between London and Cambridge, and Norwich and Ipswich. Indeed, without the possibility to exploit the coast for the purposes of trade, N. J. Williams considered that making a living would have been extremely difficult in early modern East Anglia. Nevertheless, in regard to the ability of the land to sustain a healthy agricultural industry, Sir John Maynard stated in 1650 that the fens were excellent for farming, and more recently Joan Thirsk noted that the fens had supported a large population of small farmers who lived comfortably off the land.

In the last several hundred years the fen edge has been drained, drowned and drained again. At the start of our period the villages traded to the north via the waterways, rather more than by road, and in the modern district of South Cambridgeshire there are only three or four villages which lie further than 12 miles from the quays at Wisbech, Kings Lynn or Cambridge, or their navigable rivers, due to the lodes which feed inland to the villages of Reach, Swaffham Bulbeck and Lode.

People and Religion

In the sixteenth century William Camden stated that during the Saxon period the fen-men were called Girvii, ‘a sort of people (much like the place) of rugged uncivilised tempers envying others whom they term upland men’, while more recently Graham Nicholson and Jane Fawcett stated that ‘Contemporaries in the sixteenth century were aware that the worst ignorance was found in the more remote villages of heaths and forests and fens’. Nevertheless, whilst it might be considered rather sweeping, its remoteness probably contributed to the fact that the feudal system in the medieval period was barely noticeable in the fens; most peasants were freemen and there were no large, secular estates. Elizabeth Davis noted that the fen provided suitable isolation for the founding of great monastic properties and that riverside settlements prospered throughout the period. The fenland or its immediate vicinity witnessed the founding of 65 religious houses between 1066 and the suppression of the monasteries between 1536 and 1540, and despite the relative isolation and emptiness of the fen proper, the county as a whole was, in the early sixteenth century, one of the most densely populated in the country. Whilst lowland England had between eight and 16 taxpayers per thousand acres, East Anglia generally had between 16 and 23. In terms of religion, Margaret Spufford stated that Cambridgeshire was ‘one of the least papistically inclined [counties] in the country’, though the current research questions Catholic disinclination. Religious activity continued, in varying guises during the seventeenth century, with a concentration in several villages of non-conformists, and it is from this collage of people with a spectrum of belief that this current study has evolved.

41 Parker and Pye, *The Fenland*, p.75.
42 Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p.10.
The Background

Secular Sanctuary and Sacred Space

In broad terms the home has, for much of human existence, been a personal space in which people have retired to, in order to protect themselves and to eat, sleep and relax, and for more nurturing reasons; to grow emotionally within a family, and to learn and to understand themselves and each other.

Coeval with this domestic development, the village church was considered the religious and social focus of a community. The apparently clear delineation between the uses and expectations of home and church, between privacy and congregation, between informality and closeness of family and the convention of collective ritual and expression, has helped to define the two structures and the activities within them, and appears to have been the case for centuries. Certainly, according to the independent minister John Canne in the early seventeenth century non-conformists argued that ‘to mingle profane things with divine is to sin’, while in the nineteenth century Emile Durkheim stated that ‘there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated’ as that of the sacred and the profane. Later still, Bronislaw Malinowski’s observation that ‘there have been found two clearly distinguishable domains, the Sacred and the Profane’ was based on an analysis of the Trobriand Islanders, and in a recent observation of his work Jonathan Sheehan noted that ‘This distinction between the ordinary world of work and the sphere of the sacred is thus primal to human existence…’. In a summary of the stance, Mircea Eliade described the distinction between the sacred and profane as a ‘fixed point’ in which to guide activity, and to create and organise societies.

However, a fundamental contention in my research is that the profane and the sacred were not so clearly defined and that neither home nor church experienced to the exclusion of all else practices traditionally associated with each. Both institutions witnessed activities secular and spiritual, the result of the lived experience of individuals whose secular and sacred worlds were nebulous and ever conjoined. The notion of a sharp distinction between purely religious and purely domestic space surely adds an unnecessary, if not false dichotomy to the interpretation. Certainly, before the Reformation veneration was ubiquitous, neither constrained by the confines of the Church, nor their criteria. In 1531 Rycharde Whytforde wrote that upon waking, individuals should pray, and then pray before mealtimes and before bed. On Sundays the devout householder was to gather his family together and read loudly the Paternoster, Ave Maria and Creed, ensuring that all present were aware of the sacred words.

In the early twentieth century J. Bradford stated that ‘Among settled primitive societies dwellings are not thought of only as structures or places to eat and sleep in, but have something approaching a spirit of their own’. With this in mind Lord Raglan, one of the very first to analyse the planform and development of early dwellings, observed that the house was nothing less than an institution. The spatial and temporal dimensions which frame this metaphysical activity were as broad as they were long. At least from the Netherlands on the continent, as far north as North Yorkshire, witch–posts of one form or another were employed to safeguard the domestic realm from evil. According to Malet Lambert ‘there was then no such boundary line between the secular and religion as there is with us’, a belief supported by Robert Scribner who noted that the

51 In Scandinavia during the early medieval period the ‘principle place of religious encounter’ migrated from the home to the church. M.H. Erikson, ‘Re-organisation of household space in the Viking age-median period transition in Norway’, in ‘Buildings in society international’ conference (Belfast, June 19-21, 2014).
52 Aston, England’s Iconoclasts, p.22.
53 R. Whytforde, A Werke for Householders or for Them That Have the Gydyne or Governaunce of any Company (London, 1531), pp. 5, 10, 11, 16.
55 Somerset, ’The house – shelter or temple?’, p.72.
sacred was ‘always experienced from within the profane’. In furtherance of this contention, Amos Rapoport noted ‘The distinction…between sacred and profane is far less marked [in history] than in contemporary situations since it is the sacred that gives meaning to most things’. John McCormack also observed a far less compartmentalised life in the early modern period, so that all aspects of living and dying were part of an individual’s experience which repeatedly interacted in the spheres of architecture and art. He questioned the reciprocal transfer of daily life and church life and warned that to neglect evidence from religious buildings in analysing domestic architectural form would be wrong. In summing up, Charles Moore stated that ‘Architecture inspired by religious zeal and intended for religious uses has ever preceded that designed for secular purposes and has mainly determined the character of secular building’.

In Europe in the late medieval period there was evidence of ritual activity carried out before the altar, though firmly associated with what we now consider to be the secular world of business. In Britain at the same time, and sitting comfortably alongside the spiritual use of the church were the everyday secular uses required by the villagers, including arranging business contracts, the repair of sails and the assessment of church accounts, whilst the grounds were used for games including hand-ball and communal gatherings such as fairs, ale days and cock-fighting. However, it is timely to note that by the early seventeenth century the Church was generally tiring of secular uses, organised or otherwise.

---

60 Ibid., p.18.
In the home, the conversations that people had and the thoughts they expressed, whether of an orthodox religious nature, or of something more visceral, were occasionally articulated in visual form. Gervase Markham, the early seventeenth-century author suggested that a housewife should spend a ‘small time [in the] morning and evening bestowed in prayers, and other exercises of religion, [which] will prove no lost time at the week’s end’. Whilst other such exercises might have included catechizing and bible reading it is equally plausible, and tentatively suggested, that less strictly Christian practices were also undertaken.

The Domestic Chapel

Having proposed a hypothetical middle ground in which the secular and religious combined, it is timely to consider in more detail overt manifestations of a religious nature. Mark Girouard observed that any house of importance during the late medieval period contained both a chapel and a chaplain, and the sixteenth-century author Andrew Boorde recommended that as many of the rooms as possible that looked into the courtyard should be able to have sight of the chapel. Eamon Duffy suggested that a desire for easy access to daily prayers was one of the fundamental reasons why, in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries increasing numbers of gentry sought licenses to erect and maintain altars within their homes. Hamling developed this observation. She noted that most larger houses with decorated private chapels accommodated a range of religious objects comparable to those found in churches, while Jill Allibone noted that, by the nineteenth century, it had in fact become rather unusual to include a chapel in a house. To contextualize the decline in their construction, she noted that of a group of 380 houses built between 1835 and 1914 only 21 had a chapel constructed within, and

66 A. Boorde, The Boke for to Lerne a Man to be Wyse in Buyldynge of his Howse for the Helth of Body and to Hold Quyeteness for the Helth of his Soule and Body (London, 1550), p.12.
68 Hamling, Decorating the Godly Household, p.30.
in seven cases they were built for Catholic families.\textsuperscript{69} This trajectory of decline helps define the faltering, though nevertheless diminishing number of chapels constructed since the sixteenth century. However, not many individuals could afford the price of a domestic chapel, but sought instead to obtain a similar degree of protection through alternative means, particularly in light of the commonly held view that many considered the devil ‘the Prince of this world’ and his power, and therefore his presence, ubiquitous.\textsuperscript{70}

Domestic Symbolism and Plan Form

Some of the motifs in my research adorn the formal places within the home which, James Ayres stated, was ‘a near holy place with its lares and Penates….Indeed, for the liturgy of daily life the threshold and hearth may be seen as equivalent respectively to the church porch and altar’.\textsuperscript{71} My view reflects Ayres’, whose observation is fundamental to theories contained within the research. Girouard stated that the urge to express everything in terms of something else was based on a liking of allegory. God was ‘the great world’, the macrocosm. Man was a microcosm or ‘the little world’,\textsuperscript{72} and his mind ruled over his animal parts, in the same way that God ruled over creation. The society of each household was also a microcosm. This domestic hierarchy, with the lord as its head, was based on the natural order, in the same way as the hierarchy of the state.\textsuperscript{73} Domestic ceremony began to amplify the religious parallels. Gentlemen servants began to appear in the homes of the nobility and gentry. The carver wore his towel around his neck, ‘folded like St Andrew’s cross in front….His towel, second napkin and girdle were worn in exactly the same way as a priest wears a stole maniple and girdle for the mass’.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{73} Girouard, Life in the English Country House, p.87.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p.47; However, in correspondence with Diarmaid MacCulloch, a sartorial circularity was noted, whereby the ‘clerical vestments came, in the case of deacons at least, from what servants wore in late antiquity’. August 13, 2014.
The domestic plan form was also a vehicle for symbolism. Girouard and Malcolm Airs cited examples of early modern draughtsmanship which explored cruciform plans. Triadic forms in Wiltshire and Herefordshire may have been inspired by the religious symbolism that John Thorpe assumed for Longford when he drew up plans for the property. However, of little doubt is the symbolism employed by Thomas Tresham in his Triangular Lodge at Rushton in Northamptonshire, nor in the contents of a note, collected by William and Robert Cecil, which described a plate showing how to make a house in the form of a cross. A particularly rare planform consisted of the circular layout as in the lodge constructed for Henry Oxinden in Kent, in 1631, designed because he wished to imitate ‘the Great Architect who had created both Heaven and Earth’. In Chantmarle in Dorset a similar plan was ‘intended as a religious conceit’.75

Rapoport developed the point. He considered that the ‘overall affective response’ rather than a detailed analysis of specific aspects was most significant in analysing architectural use, and as such was ‘more a matter of latent than manifest function [which] is largely affected by images and ideals’.76 When it is realized that the concept of utility ‘goes far beyond instrumental or manifest functions’ then meaning gains significantly in importance. These activities were divided into four separate components: the activity itself; the specific way of carrying out that activity; additional or associated activities that become part of the system of activity; and the meaning of the activity. Rapoport observed that this typology related to the ‘hierarchy of levels of meaning, ranging from the concrete object through use object, value object to symbolic object’.77 By deconstructing an activity into its various physical and psychological components, Rapoport has framed the question of meaning central to this research.

Overarching the concerns of plan form and the specific elements of ornament is symbolism, the last of Rapoport’s components and, as Juan Cirlot stated, ‘the science of the relations which unite the created world with God, the material world with the

77 Ibid., pp.14, 15.
supernatural’, and the ‘art of thinking in images’. In summarising the issue Benjamin Kirby considered that religion is ‘the practise of mediating the transcendent’.

Function, Fashion and Belief

A limited range of elements within a dwelling were not employed in a practical, physical sense, in the same way that a door was, nor were they employed specifically for fashionable purposes. Rather, some aspects were commandeered to express a belief and, as Rapoport suggested, in such cases the concept of utility was then far beyond instrumental or manifest functions, such as the domestic adoption of the daisy wheel, considered by some to ward off evil. However, Walsham suggested that the divide between belief and fashion was simply a construct and she considered it unhelpful in defining either. Evidence that at a given date a certain motif had transformed from a fashionable expression to a personal spiritual amulet would prove difficult and could only ever be used in specific instances where incontrovertible evidence had been produced, rather than as a tool to help define broad psychological boundaries. M. Wobst reinforced the point. ‘The meaning of style has so many ramifications that an attempt at a comprehensive definition must either arrive at a vague theoretical statement, or become involved in an extensive review of specific usages.’ Therefore, in my research no such definition of boundaries has been attempted.

Indistinctions and Divisions

It can be seen that the historic distinctions between a church and a house, and the uses to which both were put, were not so clearly defined as one might otherwise expect, though it does nevertheless become even less clear when considering the application of

81 In discussion with Walsham, January 22, 2013.
expressions. John McCormack struck a phlegmatic note when he stated that
architectural interaction was a natural expression of everyday life. He considered that no
one consciously designed a church to look like a house, or vice versa, but rather that
motifs or constructional techniques were borrowed from each other as necessary. Peter Draper went so far as to say that by looking at buildings on a spectrum, traditional
terminologies and typologies should be avoided, and even the distinction between
profane and sacred, confronted.

My research contends that architectural indistinctions mirrored the nebulous religious
attitudes and behaviours of at least a proportion of the populace. Magic, Catholicism,
Protestantism and the multi-layered beliefs that initially created and subsequently
evolved from such a fusion, are illustrated through the compound rhetoric of the times.
Daniel Defoe described Catholicism as ‘one entire system of anti-Christian magic’, while Henry Barrow described the Elizabethan clergy as ‘Egyptian chanters’. However, such apparently clearly defined boundaries were not the entire story. George
Gifford, the preacher born in the southern fens, coined the phrase ‘church papist’ in 1582 for those Catholics who could ‘keep their conscience to themselves, and yet goe to church’. This definition sought to categorise degrees of popery, defining those
individuals who refused to attend Protestant services, and those who articulated their
Catholicism in other, less confrontational ways. Walsham stated that it was extremely
difficult to create clear boundaries between ‘conforming Catholics and those ingenuous,
but too often inconspicuous practitioners of …’ [Protestantism].

It is argued here that, in a world where physical certainty and spiritual security were
hard won for many people, not only those few generations described by Christopher

84 McCormack, ‘To understand houses, look at churches’, p.18.
86 D. Defoe, System of Magick; or a History of the Black Art: Being an Historical Account of Mankind’s Most Early Dealing with the Devil; and How the Acquaintance of Both Sides Began (London, 1727), p.352.
89 Walsham, Church Papists, pp.3,9.
Hill, the reliance on God, and whatever else might have assisted in helping the individual to survive, and in due course enter the kingdom of Heaven, was a position commonly held by the middling sort, the majority of people analysed in this research. The employment of magic and the hired help offered by cunning folk, astrologers and astronomers, in combination with the orthodox offerings of the state, equated to a spiritual palimpsest reflective of the multi-layered invocations discovered in several of the properties within the study area. However, in permeating the parish like the comforting sound of the church bells, religious belief nevertheless did not automatically constitute a unified form of brotherhood but may have been, as Keith Wrightson and David Levine suggested, socially selective or even, as Karl Marx proposed, ‘an avatar of social division’.

Context
Political and Social

The following sections have been divided into three contexts which formed the overarching framework in which many people lived their lives. In the first aspect it can be seen that almost every part of life was changing, sometimes quite chaotically. The period from the death of Henry VIII was particularly unstable religiously, politically and socially. The academically well-trodden ground that is the Reformation and its social reverberations through the leadership of Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I will inevitably be touched upon in light of various manifestations. Julia Briggs stated that religion was the single issue that dominated the period from 1580 to 1630. An avatar of social division indeed.

However, in a world where religion made up much of the experience of everyday life, there existed enough space between the pious thoughts and actions of the individual for

---

concerns to be expressed over local differences, the frequent battle for health, the concern of fire and famine – all sometimes collectively blamed on witchcraft – and, on the national scene, politics and war. Stability was sought in every respect, though as Thomas cautions, people today should not assume that contemporaries were as daunted by these issues as we might be.\(^94\) Certainly, the construction and occupation of a dwelling offered a degree of protection and a reprieve from many of the daily ordeals. As George Ewart Evans stated ‘To a man who had emerged out of the ruck and turbulence of the wars that saw the break-up of the political structure of the medieval system, [and] who was as yet uncertain of his social identity, a house was both an extension of his new self and an assurance that he and his family had real status’.\(^95\)

Every individual’s survival was challenged by the indiscriminate nature of plague, which had not left the shores of Britain since the fourteenth century, and by the seventeenth century much of the country had again been ravaged.\(^96\) Ralph Josselin in Essex and Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn in London wrote of its devastating spread.\(^97\)

In regard to political awareness, authors such as Austin Woolrych stated that the great majority of people lay ‘not only below the level of political participation, but below that of political consciousness as well’.\(^98\) However, this view has since been reconsidered by those who emphasized the social breadth of political involvement and moral awareness, including John Walter who stated that ‘the moral economy was as much that of the crown as the crowd’.\(^99\) Josselin was a country parson who had been educated at Cambridge, but lived in the small village of Earls Colne, in central Essex. He had only

---


\(^96\) P. Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1985), pp.67, 68. The only periods....when the country was free from epidemics....appear to have been between 1612 and 1624, and 1654 and 1664'. p.69.

\(^97\) A. MacFarlane (ed.), *The Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (1976; Oxford, 1991). Much of Josselin’s writing concerns his health and that of his family. Many died of plague and smallpox, but it is his casual observation that the plague began its latest round of destruction in Chester, in his diary entry for May 21, 1654 that shows his awareness of the world around him; Lee, *This Sceptred Isle*, pp.257-258.


limited contact with London, despite travelling about his own county quite frequently. Nevertheless, his diary is evidence of his grasp of the political jockeying and military posturing that was part of London life during the mid seventeenth century. It is therefore perhaps between the people that Woolrych considered below the level of political consciousness on the one hand, and the Cambridge-educated clergy on the other, that a view of the collective sentience of any fen-edge community might fairly be taken. After all, while being located on the edge of the fens and in a largely rural part of the country, the study area also witnessed first-hand the activities of Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder-General, the birth and ascent of Oliver Cromwell and the ecclesiastical purification – or vandalism - implemented by William Dowsing during the Civil War.100 The fen edge was also influenced by its Cambridge landlords and Cambridge-educated vicars, in a similar fashion to Josselin’s Earls Colne. It is fair to suggest therefore that, while distant from Norwich and London, it was nevertheless in close proximity to the heart of several major events and as such its communities were probably imbued with a degree of political consciousness well above the threshold envisioned by Woolrych.

The current research into a range of manifestations neither suggests they were geographically constrained, nor socially discrete. The period was one of observed stratification but also of social mobility.101 William Harrison divided the English into four sorts in 1577, while a generation later Sir Thomas Wilson wrote that the English were divided into nobles, citizens, yeomen, artisans and rural labourers. Wrightson stated that this observation on sorts of people was important as it evidenced a degree of stratification, and therefore a distinctive system of social inequality.102 This theme of stratification recurred throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the assertion, as Barry Coward stated, that a perfect and stable society, in which changing social degrees was unknown, was superior. It was considered good for political and social order that the rich remained rich and the poor remained poor. This social management was considered to have been ordained by God Himself as a fundamental

part of a well-ordered and integrated universe.\textsuperscript{103} This world view was often expressed through the great chain of being, a view that persisted well into the eighteenth century when authors such as Robert Moss elaborated on the theme expressed by the anonymous author of \textit{The Homily of Obedience} centuries previously, in 1547.\textsuperscript{104}

Wrightson considered the myth of the isolated, independent and immobile rural community a powerful element in our understanding of the past and for this reason it was crucial for him to emphasize that it was only part of the story. He asserted that there was much mobility in the lower ranks and offered as an example the family names from Horringer in Suffolk, recorded in the period 1600-1634. Only two names from several dozen could still be found in the same parish register for the years 1700-1734, suggesting substantial emigration, probably in furtherance of employment.\textsuperscript{105} Coward reinforced this view by stating that migration was hardly the exception but rather the social and demographic norm.\textsuperscript{106} Mobility may have been partly a function of an increasing population. Clark and Slack noted that in the 200 years from 1500 the population of England roughly doubled.\textsuperscript{107} In the Mayor’s court in Norwich weekly statistics were gathered, which illustrated nearly 10,000 more deaths than births in the city between 1582 and 1646 but the population, far from declining, rose by more than 5,000.\textsuperscript{108}

\section*{Context}

\textbf{Domestic Spiritual}

This second fundamental context can be seen broadly, and in part as the individual’s personal reactions to the effects of the first. Hill’s work considered the evolution of the home at this time as the spiritualization of the Protestant household,\textsuperscript{109} and Hamling described the most zealous adherents to this spiritualization as those in Puritan circles.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Ibid.}, p.2.
\textsuperscript{105} Wrightson, \textit{English Society}, p.50.
\textsuperscript{106} Coward, \textit{Social Change and Continuity}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Ibid.}, p.86.
\end{flushleft}
However, she acknowledged that mainstream Protestants also highlighted the religious duties of householders, while early modern commentators William Gouge and John Downname concurred that the Protestant family was in effect a little church. Social commentators and parishioners alike were becoming more conscious of the spiritual roles and expectations of the householder and his family, as propounded in various books on the domestic expectations of good Protestants. Richardson observed ‘As the King ruled the country, so the husband ruled his household. His authority there was absolute’. The Elizabethan and Jacobean theologian William Perkins explained that the primary duty of the householder was ‘to beare the chiefe stroke, and to be the principal agent, director and furtherer of worship of God within his familie…And this he doth partly by praying for and with his household, and partly by instructing them in the holy scriptures and in the groundes of religion’.

Religious art continued to be manufactured and displayed in the decades following the Reformation, though now in a domestic, rather than sacred, context. Juliet Fleming considered it ‘easy to imagine the discrete painting of forbidden images, on a more modest scale than in private chapels, on the interior walls of recusant households’. Despite the cloak of Christianity which shrouded the home, and served to protect as well as instruct, it was for some, nevertheless, a hostage to fortune. Ewart Evans stated that in erecting a dwelling the householder remembered the traditional methods of placating misfortune and averting malevolence from the place in which he anticipated spending the rest of his life. It was a serious undertaking, ‘believing that the devices he followed would have the effect that men had always hoped for them….small and usually obscure evidences of a ceremony’, implied or carried out by the owner or his builders, to ensure that his house would stand for as long as required. These activities also sought to protect the occupants from the many misfortunes awaiting them.

111 C. Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006), p.27.
113 Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p.1.
The spiritual intensity of life naturally varied between individuals, so the collective well of belief rose and fell amongst the populace and as concepts evolved and were forgotten; perhaps not surprising given the Catholic Church’s own concept of superstition, which Thomas considered had ‘a certain elasticity about it’, and which wove orthodoxy with magic.\footnote{Thomas, \textit{Religion and the Decline of Magic}, p.55.}

\section*{Context}
\textbf{Witchcraft and Demonology}

The final context, which acted as the darkly painted back-drop to the stage set described in the first context, and is seen as the individual response to the second context, was the frequent fear of witches and the devil. Despite the great chain of being, and an understanding by many of their place in the world, in the cracks and crevices of life the spectre of witchcraft and demonism permeated. Malcolm Gaskill stated that there was a noticeable undercurrent of supernatural thought common to individuals at all levels of society from London to the most rural backwater.\footnote{M. Gaskill, \textit{Witchfinders – A Seventeenth Century Tragedy} (London, 2005), p.xiii.} In Cambridgeshire in the late sixteenth century vicars Richard Greenham and Henry Holland were both regularly troubled by parishioners’ irrational witchmongering.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.192.} However, as the Reformation changed ecclesiastical life for ever, so formally sanctioned church magic dissolved and society was forced to take action against the dangers which threatened to develop.\footnote{Thomas, \textit{Religion and the Decline of Magic}, p.498; F. Valletta, \textit{Witchcraft, Magic and Superstition in England, 1640-1670} (Aldershot, 2000), p.16.}

The belief in witches was expressed broadly and regularly both by sceptics and supporters of the Church alike. The contemporary writer John Gaule pointed out that not every old woman with a wrinkled face, ‘a gobber tooth’ or ‘a dog or cat by her side’ was a witch. However, on the other hand he also stated that there would be ‘witches unto the world’s end’, and that there were ‘likely still to bee more witches under the popish; then in the Protestant religion’.\footnote{J. Gaule, \textit{Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts} (London, 1646), pp.5, 9, 16.} Indeed, Thomas Ady described the Popish clergy themselves as ‘the witches of these latter times’.\footnote{T. Ady, \textit{A Candle in the Dark: Or a Treatise Concerning Witches and the Nature of Witchcraft} (London, 1656), p.56.} During the mid seventeenth
century the intellectual elite believed in the devil as essential, if one was to believe in God and, according to Jeffery Russell demonologists had noted that unbelief in the existence of the devil was effectively atheism.122 This was also the case with respect to the belief in witchcraft. It had been elevated to the position of a Christian heresy, the greatest of sins because, as Thomas observed, ‘it involved the renunciation of God and the deliberate adherence to his greatest enemy’.123 However, despite a general belief in witchcraft and the convenience of its application, there is little suggestion that sixteenth and seventeenth-century people believed that, for instance, the spread of plague had been deliberately created and broadcast by witches. Indeed, Richard Leake stated in 1598 that its spread was neither the result of infected air, nor the ‘distemperature of men’s bodies….much less the malicious and devilish practices of witches….but the mass and multitude of our sins’.124

Everyday life was also coloured by observances of the weather and the omens it described, as well as concerns for ‘monsters….[and] sky-symbols’. Alan MacFarlane stated that it was quite conceivable for university-educated men such as Josselin to believe that old women had ‘the power to inflict injury with their curses….It was a natural counterpart of his faith in the power of prayer that he should also believe in the power of a curse’.125

An additional complexity relates to associations of the witch and the devil with Catholicism.126 Peter Maxwell-Stuart stated that in the fourteenth century ‘Wycliffe identified the Papacy itself with Antichrist’ and, in similarly forthright language from the early seventeenth century, Canne noted that the authors of particular non-conformist writings ‘were the popes, which were all Antichrists’.127 The ‘witches of Warboys’, siblings from a village on the edge of the fens, were held to be Papists. ‘So that what good thing so ever you named, it [the devil] misliked; but whatsoever concerning the

123 Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p.438.
126 Valletta, Witchcraft, Magic and Superstition, p.21.
pope’s paltrie, it seemed pleased and pacified’. 128 This example of the convenience of association is not the last time in this research that it is seen to assist an argument, and in this particular situation it bolstered the case against them. They were eventually hanged.

Rumour, mistrust and division increased the momentum in a frenetic spiritual world. The collective frenzy was epitomised in East Anglia by the activities of Matthew Hopkins, the Witchfinder General. John Gaule noted that when Hopkins and his accomplice John Stearne arrived villagers ‘were said to talk more of the infallible and wonderful power of the witch-finders than they do of God, Christ or the Gospel’. 129

It is therefore against this backdrop of social and spiritual activity that the occupants of the fen sought to guard their worlds at least in part through ‘small and usually obscure evidences of a ceremony’, aspects of which form the body of this research. 130

**The End of an Era**

The period under review relates neatly to a time from which sufficient evidence of expression has been found in the houses of the southern fen to generate theory. Similar research to establish the situation prior to the sixteenth century is scant, due in part no doubt to the lack of unadulterated dwellings which remain. At the other end of the early modern period, by the start of the eighteenth century, a process of religious and architectural democratization had slowly evolved, in which idiosyncratic thoughts and the meanings that the fabric of a building might once have contained had been largely subsumed, partially influenced by the spread of collective architectural fashions, the arrival of the Enlightenment and the arguably concomitant changes to the law, including the 1736 bill repealing the Witchcraft Act of 1604. 131

---


129 Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience*, p.93. Hopkins was from Manningtree, in Essex.

130 Ewart Evans, *The Pattern Under the Plough*, p.53.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

My dissertation involves spatial and temporal analysis and there is no similar study on which a direct evaluation might be made, or evidence compared. Therefore, an assessment of the current academic position involves knitting together works from various fields of research in order to create an historiographical tapestry.

In this review, and following appraisals of belief, religion and superstition, an overview of the current position is given in regard to domestic choreography – a phrase employed here to describe the use of, and movement through, domestic space. Domestic choreography is the thread which links the motifs by moving through space from the hall, through the parlour to the private chambers above. However, for the sake of clarity, the historiography of each of the five motifs explored within this research is assessed at the beginning of each relevant chapter.

Defining Belief

Beliefs were nuanced by those who listened to them explained. In turn they developed, so that idiosyncrasy coursed through the definitions as spirituality coursed through the early modern home. However, and in order to create a baseline from which to work, I have defined belief as a view that an individual holds to be true. Despite the brevity of this definition, it is a broad one, and in this context includes beliefs whether considered ‘religious’ or ‘spiritual’, a Christian faith or a folk tradition. Belief is also ‘a coat against the nakedness which functions to screen off the abyss of mystery that surrounds us…”

Herein lies a fundamental aspect of the research. The mystery which surrounded people was explained through the systems of Christianity, and in this work it is their nebulous nature and diaphanous boundaries which are fundamental to attempting any understanding of meaning. At the beginning of our period, all belief consisted of a degree of supernatural power. It was, as Thomas stated, an ‘essential element in the Anglo-Saxon Church’s fight against paganism, and missionaries did not fail to stress the

---

1 J.W. Fowler, Stages of Faith (San Francisco, 1981), p.xii
superiority of Christian prayers to heathen charms’. The benediction of salt and water, the worship of saints and the reliance on holy relics ensured that the Catholic Church acted as a repository of supernatural power which could be bestowed upon the laity to assist them in their hours of need. However, in stepping back from the fray, it seems clear that many customs, practices and translated beliefs were borrowed by the Christians from pre-Christian groups, muddying religious waters from the outset.2

The Muddied Holy Waters of Superstition and Religion

Andrew Cambers stated that superstition was an ‘elastic concept that was stretched to dismiss the religion of opponents’; and, as well as being a wide-ranging insult, it had a theological definition, formulated by Thomas Aquinas, who considered that there were two forms of superstition: incorrect, excessive worship of the correct god, and ‘direction of the worship, due to God, towards something else’.4

Graham Nicholson and Jane Fawcett suggested that in order to mollify the gods and convert - or at least contain and manage - the late pre-Christians, the early Catholic Church had to harness the miraculous, accepting that they had their own deities and spirits which, in time, were commandeered by the Christians.5 Thomas used the word superstition to describe some of the work of the medieval Church and considered that a diverse range of ritual activities were administered under its auspices.6 However, in amplifying the debate, Cambers considered superstition, like witchcraft, as religion’s opposite,7 while Euan Cameron drew the two ends of the debate together when he

---

5 G. Nicholson and J. Fawcett, The Village in History (London, 1988), p.76. Officially, ‘the Church taught that observance and ritual had power of themselves and drew their strength only from the faith of the participants’. However this was considered too subtle for some. The Church’s stance was weakened further by the absorption of pagan elements such as Christmas, which took over the festive character of the midwinter feast of Saturn.
6 Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p.49.
7 Cambers, ‘Demonic possession’, pp.3-35.
described superstition as a flexible designation. He considered it a reasonably disorganised group of beliefs and practices imbedded in tradition.  

With the accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 Protestants were in the ascendant and they considered Catholicism to be a ‘particularly pernicious form of superstition’. Scribner, writing in the late twentieth century, felt that the Protestants themselves had no intention of demystifying the mysterious. He saw parallels between the supernaturalism of Catholicism and aspects of Protestant culture. Bibles and images of leading Protestant reformers were ‘imbued with ritual and apotropaic potencies similar to those attributed to Catholic relics or sacred images’. He observed that, in regard to the context of ‘physick’, many theological commentators left natural medicine alone. ‘Believers were expected to “honour the physician for the need thou hast of him”’. Frederick Valletta, a contemporary of Scribner’s, stated however that superstition ‘often simply meant unbelief in a deity, or a lack of godliness, atheism, even’. The term was therefore very wide ranging and included belief in ghosts, astrology, portents and the power of witches. In returning to the early modern period, the freethinker Thomas Hobbes stated that ‘this feare of things invisible is the naturall seed of that, which everyone in himself calls religion; and in them that worship or feare that power otherwise than they do, superstition’.

The muddied holy waters spilled over into the analysis of the effects of the Reformation on the populace. There is a clear polarity in historical writing between early authors such as Arthur Dickens who proposed a largely supportive understanding of the introduction of Protestantism, and later historians such as Jack Scarisbrick and Christopher Haigh who argued that the early modern populace was more sympathetic to

---

8 E. Cameron, Enchanted Europe. Superstition, Reason and Religion, 1250-1750 (Oxford, 2010). Cameron stated that ‘Attempts to discern the unknown through divination, and to control it, or at least protect against it, through simple use of charms...These beliefs privileged experience over analysis.’ p.5.
9 Ibid., p.5.
11 Cameron, Enchanted Europe, p.32.
the old religion, and only changed sides under duress.\textsuperscript{14} Eamon Duffy became aware that his approach had been considered revisionist in \textit{The Stripping of the Altars} in 1992 and so, 20 years later, clarified that his book was in fact self-consciously polemical.\textsuperscript{15} However, amongst these ostensibly partisan groups are mediators such as Robert Whiting, Tessa Watt and Christopher Marsh who saw the Reformation as a movement in which the majority of people largely accepted the doctrines, for better or worse, and in the fullness of time.\textsuperscript{16}

It is my own view that the meaning and the effect anticipated by changing that meaning was conveniently modified both by the individual speaking and the individual receiving and interpreting; as well as through the natural progression of time and with it, context. Certainly, designations were used positively and pejoratively and semantics hide a history of contention and conflict.

\textbf{Space, Segregation and Spirituality}

In the sixteenth century Andrew Boorde devoted the first several chapters of his book to the conservation of health, and he described how and where one should build a house in order to lengthen life and benefit the soul. There is a distinct sense of the spiritual in his explanation of how a house should be kept. He discussed the most suitable orientation for windows to allow the through flow of clean air. The ‘south wind doth corrupt and doth make evil vapors’ whereas the north wind ‘purgeth all vapors’.\textsuperscript{17} In the following century however, Sir Balthazar Gerbier contradicted the physical orientation advocated

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
by Boorde. He suggested that ‘setting the front of a building to the north-west…. makes
work for physicians….surgeons….and grave makers’.18

Beyond our period, but illustrative of the continuing exploration of function and form
are the various designers in the nineteenth century who considered how structures
should be conceived so that the internal space would be as serviceable as possible.
Stevens and Burn tried to design farmhouses so that they would be ‘in the fullest sense
of the term….fit to live in, so [they] endeavoured to plan the structures without
reference to what their external form would be’.19

From an early modern analysis of form we enter the modern age. During the mid
twentieth century Fitzroy Somerset (Lord Raglan) wrote a paper in which he claimed
that ‘all houses could, fundamentally, be seen as a mirror between the Earth Mother and
the Sky Father’ a place for nurturing and spirituality.20 Rapoport noted years later that
Raglan had succeeded in demonstrating that the house was much more than simply a
shelter. Indeed, for many historic cultures the house was the only structure to act as a
temple. ‘Not only was the house the sole temple for daily….religion for the ancient
Chinese, but everything about it was sacred – roof, walls, door, fire and well’.21
Rapoport however considered Pierre Deffontaines’ analysis of the evolution of the
home more balanced than Raglan’s, as he mentioned the effects of material forces on
development. Nevertheless, Deffontaines’ focus entirely on religion as the catalyst for
this development meant that he presented a rather partisan view, according to
Rapoport.22 Another critic of Raglan, Matthew Johnson considered his work ahistorical
and unsystematic by modern standards, though he accepted that it raised several
interesting points in relation to the concept of the sacred.23

In combination with Sir Cyril Fox, Raglan also analysed the style, construction and plan form of Monmouthshire houses, and during the following years in Britain architectural historians became more involved. John Smith analysed roof construction and aisled halls,\(^{24}\) while Reginald Cordingley published a classification of roof types \(^{25}\) and Patrick Faulker analysed medieval planforms in 1958.\(^{26}\) Three years later Maurice Barley wrote a general history of vernacular architecture.\(^{27}\)

While Barley focused on layout and use he also introduced probate inventories as a tool of analysis and thus began the historical and topographical examination of houses. Barley was not alone in his understanding that the study of old houses should not be considered in isolation, but an aspect of history generally.\(^{28}\) During this time, William Hoskins criticised students of vernacular architecture for ignoring documents and being obsessed with structural detail,\(^{29}\) and Eric Mercer argued that the obsession with structural form had resulted in the study of structure becoming an end in itself, rather than as a means to an end, with the result that it had undermined the development of a dialogue with other specialists in related fields of research.\(^{30}\)

In the United States during the same period a notable body of anthropological and sociological research had been carried out,\(^{31}\) and it was considered by then that there might be up to a dozen ways legitimately to understand a house, which prevented students of vernacular architecture from making simplistic assumptions that unassuming

\(^{26}\) P. Faulkner, ‘Domestic planning from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries’, Archaeological Journal, 115 (1960), pp.150-183.
\(^{29}\) Ibid., p.167.
forms represented unassuming realities. Whilst Thomas Hubka considered Bernard Rudofsky’s analysis of vernacular architectural evolution a misconception, summarising his theory of development as amounting to ‘mystical causation’, Hubka himself considered that vernacular change was ‘circumscribed by habit and tradition’. 

Kenneth Ames studied the implied meanings behind artefacts present in the hallways of Victorian houses, including hall stands, chairs and card receivers. He stated that ‘by studying these objects one can locate and analyse certain features of the Victorian age’, and in his analyses of historic American homes, Henry Glassie stated that buildings were products of ‘desire and emotion’ - and when that principle had become accepted, students could begin to understand houses from the inside out. ‘But first one must understand that material expression is but a mask of mind’, an observation crucial to the current research.

In the 1970s and 1980s social and architectural historians such as Mark Girouard reflected on the use of space within early modern country houses. Girouard suggested that grand houses ‘were an accurate index of the ambitions – or lack of them – of their owners’. Privacy and separation from servants grew notably in the seventeenth century but it was probably at its greatest in the early eighteenth. He noted that, whilst a vast quantity of architectural historical knowledge had been gained between the 1940s and 1970s it was only quite recently that architectural historians had started to look beyond the structure to an interpretation of use and intention, and he noted that this form of research was sufficiently robust and articulate to stand alone. In reinforcing this observation, Rapoport wrote about meaning in the built environment during the same period, describing much of the transient and permanent, or non-fixed and fixed

---

37 Ibid., p.12.
features as carrying meaning, expressed by the designer and interpreted by owner, tenant and visitor.\(^{38}\)

This line of research was further explored by other social archaeologists who considered the theoretical significance of domestic space, from pre-history to modern times.\(^{39}\) Thomas Saunders summed up neatly when he stated that ‘Physical space is a social product, constituted by historically specific social practices that shape its character and form’.\(^{40}\)

Whilst Matthew Johnson also contributed to Ross Samson’s book, his more recent work on housing culture concentrated on the changing meaning of space and its systematic and gradual enclosure, which necessitated a degree of social segregation and was reflective of changes in cultural values and meanings which were conveyed through the house.\(^{41}\) He suggested that the most sophisticated study into domestic space prior to his own in 1993 was carried out by Henrietta Moore, who stated that ‘to understand how the organisation of space comes to have meaning it is necessary to relate that meaning to the economic and social realities that both produce and are produced by the ordering of that domestic space’.\(^{42}\) This understanding of meaning, in turn, feeds into the anthropological theory of habitus, which is discussed in the chapter on taper burns.

Johnson observed how Dell Upton and John Vlach considered how the study of intention became the absolute one in vernacular architectural studies. He also assured us of the necessity of proposing that houses be considered cultural products, but cautioned that culture was not some disembodied ‘folk mind’, and that ‘meanings of architecture may also change between overt and implicit, official and unofficial.….’ Meanings therefore varied through time and nuanced through the ear and the eye of the beholder.\(^{43}\)

41 Johnson, *Housing Culture*, p.106.
Other theorists also considered the domestic employment of space and its relative democracy within the home. William Hillier and Julienne Hanson determined that the front parlour was a ‘transpatial space. As such it must be insulated from its immediate surroundings and from everyday transactions’.\(^{44}\) While this analysis related to the post-war home, it could equally have reflected the parlour in the two or three cell closed houses of the seventeenth century. Johnson argued that the slow closure of space within the home reflected the rising ideals of privacy, for example in separating staff from householders, and that the forms of the home could reflect and enable the cultural and psychological lives of its residents.\(^{45}\) Adrian Green reiterated Johnson’s view that enclosure sought to segregate the elite and middling sorts from their staff and others.\(^{46}\)

In many of the inventories analysed the houses of both gentlemen and yeomen from the last decades of the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century consisted in large part of hall, parlour (sometimes also a little parlour), kitchen, pantry and buttery, with chambers over some or all of these ground floor rooms. However, within this architectural and social milieu glimpses of individual ambition and architectural transition can be seen. In an inventory from 1671, Robert Griggs’ property in Hinxton, in Cambridgeshire featured a hall and a parlour, but whilst there was no buttery, perhaps considered a sign of the vernacular past, the property featured a ‘soller’ or solar, an early term for a retiring room on the upper floor.\(^ {47}\) What is intriguing however is that the dwelling also featured a ‘dyning room’, the only one discovered in dozens of inventories studied across three counties, and suggestive of Griggs’ desire on the one hand to reference the past but on the other to acknowledge the aspirational architectural formalities yet to come.\(^ {48}\)

A fundamental theme in this research concerns the ideals of privacy and the adoption of the home as a vehicle to articulate belief – and the question of whether privacy enabled an individual to express their beliefs more satisfactorily, or whether in expressing that belief domestic privacy slowly evolved. In terms of comfort, Johnson considered that

\(^{44}\) W. Hillier and J. Hanson The Social Logic of Space (Cambridge, 1984), p.159.  
\(^{45}\) Johnson, Housing Culture, p.1.  
\(^{47}\) Johnson, Housing Culture, p.56.  
\(^{48}\) Cambridgeshire CRO, Ely Bonds and Inventories, 1669-1673. Spool no. 2301112.
privacy must be seen in the context of ‘other cultural shifts…such as the secularization of culture, changing patterns of social display, and the rise of civility’.\textsuperscript{49}

During the same period Sarah Pearson’s concern was that archaeologists and vernacular architectural historians should look at the evolution of buildings in the context of the landscape in which they sit; and to this end, an assessment of the documentary evidence was crucial in fully understanding the meaning of old houses. Like researchers before her, she also acknowledged that several eminent historians had already tried to set the buildings into an historical context, though she conceded that much remained to be done.\textsuperscript{50}

Between 2001 and 2006 the Arts and Humanities Research Council supported a research program which combined the theories of scholars from many disciplines in an attempt to further the study of the domestic interior. Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant sought to discover not so much what the images and texts of their imagined interiors represented, but rather ‘what that representation [was] designed to convey’, echoing Rapoport’s fourth concept of utility and his symbolism of meaning, discussed previously. They believed that current research consistently emphasized the permeability of public/private boundaries and as such stated that the domestic interior was never ‘merely private – it is a place of hospitality and business, production and consumption, all of which inevitably challenge any notion of an impermeable boundary’.\textsuperscript{51} Nevertheless, in this research that concept is questioned in light of the gradual enclosure of space and the employment of upper chambers for particular expressions that were rarely applied elsewhere.\textsuperscript{52}

Given this enclosure during the early modern period, it would appear that individuals sought out privacy for, amongst other things, intimate spiritual connection, perhaps


\textsuperscript{52} Johnson, \textit{Housing Culture}. See especially pp.64-105.
justifying Aynsley and Grant’s inference that privacy was hard won. Notably, the historian of private life, Philippe Aries, described England as the ‘birthplace of privacy’. Nicholas Cooper observed that, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and across the social and architectural spectrum, the psychological landscape common across all levels of society manifested itself in the increasing value placed upon privacy, the increasing focus on family at the expense of community and the developing attitudes to display which he considered were all indispensable elements.

Hierarchy was certainly a fundamental aspect of the meaning of medieval great houses, though during the later Middle Ages the concept that it should extend into the planform of buildings developed, though it was not until the sixteenth century that it had fully evolved.

As we leave our period at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Palladianism was starting to encourage and codify plainer construction. Colin Platt summarised that ‘the second great rebuilding….saw the triumph of taste over riches’. During the early modern period the development of a national style, which did not readily lend itself to expressions of status, began to usurp the local vernacular, which had traded in individual expression for centuries.

**Objects and Materials**

In regard to the analysis of objects and materials, Hamling argued there was a requirement to consider the various and complex exchanges between people and objects that participated in cultural activity. She stated that it was only when materials were

---

conceptualized and studied as dynamic props that researchers began to understand in a more subtle way their meaning to individuals.\textsuperscript{58}

**Summary**

In summarising the analysis of domestic evolution in regard to the profane and the sacred, the discussion has skirted collectively around the subject of the current research, whilst leaving sufficient room for a study of this nature. Domestic choreography and meaning are inseparable, but the manifestations of belief, a consequence of their coeval development, remain largely unexplored.

This study will pioneer a new direction in researching cultural practice by highlighting the props employed by individuals who expressed their beliefs within the confines of their own domestic sanctuaries. It will be a valuable template for scholars who study early modern society, the Reformation and its impacts upon the individual, as well as those involved in aspects of domestic, architectural and art historical analysis.

1 PROJECTION

Wood Carving

This first research chapter considers woodcarving in hall and parlour, the most immediate show of expression on entry into the early modern house. It will describe what messages the images conveyed, and how they were conveyed. The first four examples feature to varying degrees a combination of status, wealth and spiritual affiliation, though the balance between the outward show of status, and the inward expression of spirituality tips in favour of transcendent expression as the chapter develops. The final example, expressing a message most closely representative of a solely spiritual meaning, therefore focuses not on a formulaic, commissioned architecture but on an idiosyncratic expression of belief, and is thus closest in spirit to the meaning of the subsequent chapters.

In terms of the vocal metaphor the majority of messages here were projected, though the final example distorts the otherwise convenient nomenclature.

Beyond an assessment of carving styles in the form of a simple typology, including the RCHM’s work,1 the historiography of the meaning of woodcarving in the domestic realm is limited. Tara Hamling recently considered how householders expressed their beliefs through furniture and decoration. The thrust of her evidence suggested that whilst religious imagery was proscribed by the church, it was considered acceptable in domestic settings so long as it was employed merely for decorative and didactic purposes.2 While there was consensus among theologians that biblical imagery was acceptable outside the church, it was however also stipulated that worship should only take place within its confines. Hamling considered the meaning of iconolatry should be considered metaphorically, so that within the home the image operated on a basic level as a representative of remarkable status.3

---

3 Ibid., pp.334, 327.
Wooden figures in church were criticized by reformers since they prompted active worship, often in the form of touching. They identified contact with carvings as idolatrous. Hamling suggested that the employment of such images in the house raised the status of the object, whilst at the same time it reduced the spiritual power of the image. It was considered that this limited the chance of such activity being considered idol worship by the Church.4

In regard to the diffusion of knowledge of the carved decorative arts on the continent, Reinhard Peesch illustrated the parallel development in furniture,5 and he reproduced a chart by Suzanne Tardieu which showed the spread of fashions. It took approximately 120 years from the formation of the style known as ‘Renaissance’ at the upper levels of society, to filter down to what Tardieu described as ‘popular furniture’ in 1768; and approximately 50 years from the formation of ‘Louis XIV’ in 1680 to its development as popular furniture in 1726.6 Whilst there is no evidence of the date of the work in the sample, the comparison with furniture highlights the artistic and cultural impacts of fashion on the various sorts in society.

The Research

The first four carvings described in this research suggest a close link with the influences of the nascent English Renaissance. Two pairs of carved portrait roundels, known in the early modern period as ‘Romayne’, enable a brief insight into their patrons. Their very existence is welcome given the fashions of the seventeenth century for the repudiation of ornament, reflective of the introspective attitudes of the period and expressed perhaps most clearly through the rise of puritanism.7 This observation on approved behaviour is fundamental to the research and its implications echo through the chapters.

4 Ibid., p.333.
6 S. Tardieu, Meubles Regionaux Dates (Paris, 1950). By the time of the creation of Louis XV furniture in 1740, there was no delay in its production at the ‘popular’ end of the social spectrum. Peesch, The Ornament in European Folk Art, p.13.
The following example contains the second pair of Romayne carvings, though it also houses decorative early seventeenth-century panelling in an opposing room, similar in form to that in the third property, located opposite its parish church. The fourth house contains a pair of caryatids supporting a mantle shelf over a fireplace, the home of the mother of Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury, (1694-1715) and an expression of social arrival whilst the fifth, the oldest, references kingly adoration and served to protect the residents of the house.

Bottisham Place

At its southern end the parish of Bottisham was devoted to arable farming, and from the fourteenth century many villagers owned sheep. Indeed, by the 1700s 30 individuals owned a total of more than 1800.8

Bottisham Place is located at the southern end of the village and is a timber framed farmhouse probably constructed in the late fifteenth century.9 Its primary axis was originally aligned along the Cambridge to Newmarket road, but in the sixteenth century was enlarged to the north, to follow the line of the High Street, perpendicular to Newmarket road.

In 1564 a pair of timber portrait roundels were carved to decorate the interior of this property. The householders were the Hassells, yeomen and gentlemen farmers with familial roots in Suffolk. Keith Wrightson stated that the landed gentry were only resident in a limited proportion of the settlements from which they obtained their rental incomes and, while the term yeomen was given to those farmers who were sometimes defined as owner-occupiers, in practice they were simply farmers of substantial means who produced a notable surplus which they traded.10 The contemporary observer William Harrison described yeomen as ‘those which by our law are called legales

---
9 English Heritage List Entry, no.1127112.
hominès, freeborn English and may dispense of their own free land in yearly revenue to the sum of 40s…”

It would appear that the house was originally a single storey open hall, at least in one of its four bays, and was constructed for John Hassell, who died at the end of the fifteenth century. Through primogeniture he passed the property and his landholdings onto his eldest surviving son, who in turn passed it onto his first son for which we have a definite record, also called John.

![Illustration 3 indicating the probable location of the panelled scheme in Bottisham Place.](image)

The family was influential. This John’s brother, William, worked in Cambridge as town sergeant prior to the 1560s and was one of the individuals directed by Queen Mary to disinter the body of Martin Bucer, the German Protestant theologian who had died in Cambridge more than 20 years previously, the Queen having demanded that his bones be burnt. William made his will in 1570.

---


12 This John Hassell might have been the John Esswell of Great St Mary’s parish in Cambridge, burgess and teacher who leased a tenement and shops in Market Square in Cambridge, in September 1475. CCCC09/08/211 (former reference: IX 11.q).

13 J. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of These Latter and Perilous Dayes Touching Matters of the Church Wherein are Comprehended and Described the Great Persecutions and Horrible Troubles that have been Wrought and Practiced by the Romishe Prelates* (London, 1563), p.1211.

The continued influence of the family is witnessed one hundred years later when a probable relative, ‘Mr Hasell’, acted as one of the treasurers of court of the King’s Bench for the county, witnessed in the quarter sessions for the mid seventeenth century.15

In returning to the sixteenth century, it is believed that the family in Bottisham consisted of three generations. This was comparatively rare and the grandparents would probably have played a role in the care of their grandchildren.16 Barry Coward estimated that for three hundred years less than 6% of nobility and gentry dwellings accommodated three generations under a single roof.17 Elder sons tended to set up house in the family’s secondary seat, sometimes in an adjoining county, though Roger Brown suggested the chambers over the service rooms may have served the purpose.18

In terms of their internal relationships, some historians believed that families of this sort created a psychological atmosphere of distance and control.19 However others, including more recent historians such as Linda Pollock offered an opposing view and, while C.J. Somerville considered Pollock’s conclusion of a majority practice of affection to be incorrect, Ralph Houlbrooke’s third way saw a synthesis of Christian and humanist ideas in which the reality of childhood lay somewhere between the two extremes of brutality and cosseting.20

Though on the cusp of major social change, marriage usually remained business-like, sometimes arranged and loveless, and any subsequent family a part of a broader system

---

15 Cambridgeshire CRO, Q/SO2.
of relationships, linked to kin by dependence and allegiance. Nevertheless, the Hassells lived in an age when nuclear families were developing in the wake of change from the old lineage society; a shift characterised by the change from restricted prospects and individual ideas, to the adoption of the more ubiquitous standards of a civilised society. It is therefore illuminating to witness the attention of these grandparents being directed to some obvious extent towards a newly arrived grandchild - to whom we shall return.

The freehold and copyhold land that the Hassells held involved many acres of arable in East Anglia. Much of the land would have been sown with corn as the burgeoning city of London stimulated regional agricultural specialisation. The harvest has been described as the ‘heartbeat of the economy’ and arable farmers held an important as well as high status position within the community. Wrightson stated that the number and character of these emergent capitalists had developed to be as much a feature of the landscape by the mid sixteenth century as the crops they grew.

The family, like many of the middling sort, probably married strategically for prosperity and influence, and Richardson noted that early modern society had become more polarized in terms of its communal relations. At the end of their lives, the wills of John and Agnes and their son John clearly illustrated the wealth they had amassed, and the money they gave to the poor in Bottisham and Stow cum Quy reflected a proper Christian concern for those less well off, particularly as the poor were, in a sense, the images of Christ, which meant gifts to them became a deliberate act of homage to God. The Hassells were no doubt similarly concerned for their own spiritual journey,

---

21 Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage, p.100. The causes are clear, according to Stone. They included: the Reformation, cloaked in an ‘overriding moral allegiance through the preaching of the Word’; education, whether at grammar school, university or the Inns of Court; the common law; the growth of commercialism and market individualism; and the institutional expansion of the market state.

22 C.W. Marsh, The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630 (1994; Cambridge, 2005), p.280. Rycharde, son of John and Agnes, was a wealthy yeoman farmer. He held lands in Bottisham and Balsham where, in the 1590s, ‘his lay subsidy assessment was much higher than that of any other tenant.’


24 Coward, Social Change and Continuity, p.11.

25 Wrightson, Earthly Necessities, pp.139-140.


27 TNA, PROB 11/54/371, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury; Leedham-Green and Rodd (eds), Index of the Probate Records of the Consistory Court of Ely, 1449-1858, Part II F-P, p.524; Prior to the Reformation, Rycharde Whytforde stated that ‘what you give unto [the poor] you give unto Christ’. 
which may have been furthered by such offerings, and whilst women only made wills in exceptional circumstances, the will of the influential and wealthy Agnes’ was proven in 1575.  

As we briefly travel beyond our period we find an educated and inquisitive family. At some time during the later seventeenth or earlier eighteenth century one particular individual wrote a long and idiosyncratic medical note-book for personal reference, partly based on the teachings of Johannes Hartmann, a German medical practitioner who died in 1631, and partly on the writings of Nicholas Culpeper, the herbalist whose book *Pharmacopoeia Londoniensis* was first published in 1649. Though no-one in the Hassell family was ever a member of the Royal College, the individual involved certainly had the education to exploit an inquiring mind. And in looking back before our period, we find his possible forebear, John Esswell, being described as ‘Magistri’, illustrating the development of an educated family conversant with letters and learning.

Meaning and Expression

The story of the carved roundels and, by extension the meanings behind particular phases of the Hassell family’s lives, presents itself in three parts. The first relates to the reasons behind the creation of the carvings. The second relates to their partial destruction, and the third relates to the relocation of the entire group.

---

30 Cambridgeshire CRO, Q/SO2 Quarter sessions.
Plates 1a and 1b showing Agnes and John Hassell.

Such a significant investment, and one bursting with messages would have undoubtedly been located in the most significant space in the home, intended to be witnessed by family, friends and associates alike. Henry Wotton advised his readers in 1624 that disposing of pictures within domestic interiors should be ‘as properly bestowed for their quality as fitly for their grace’, and although he referred to paintings, Hamling observed that his comment indicated an acknowledgement that the form and style of ornament both influenced and reflected the character within a room.31

Plate 2 showing the panelling in the bedchamber.

The group of panels in all probability represent the faces of John and his wife, Agnes. They form the major part of a confident relief scheme featuring winged putti and the obvious, studied and quite comprehensive removal of what was possibly a shield or a figure, between them. The remains of John Hassell’s initials can be made out at the bottom of the panel. To the right of John is a pair of small, distinctively stylised linen-fold panels with delicate cruciforms cut into the top and bottom of the folds, employed to amplify their devotion to God.

Plates 3a and 3b illustrating the winged putti and the central panel comprehensively removed; and the linen fold panels.

Such imagery was used to decorate a range of domestic objects in the period including fixtures and fittings, and many houses were adorned with biblical stories of family relationships. By the mid sixteenth century artistic inclinations in England were more closely allied with Protestant Holland and Germany than with Italy and France, and while many of the great houses remained English in their essential form, artisans from these same countries were employed to design various forms of embellishment. The three-quarter portrait, whether carved or painted, was considered ‘Flemish’ by contemporaries, and in essence captured something of the classical moment. By this

---

period portraits were also being carved onto furniture, perhaps as a more mobile expression of status.35

Tudor architecture was compared to Tudor dress. Maurice Howard considered the form and ornament of buildings needed to be balanced between what was, on the one hand, conventional and expected within particular cultural groups and, on the other, the flourishes of individuality expressed within recognised boundaries. In criticizing gratuitous extravagance, clothing and architecture were often combined. Howard stated that like clothing, the external show of architecture became part of the act of creating one’s public image’,36 perhaps in contrast to Johnson’s earlier observation that in transitioning from status to class individuals began spending their money less on the fabric of the home and more on moveable items. Certainly, in support of Johnson, Harrison observed that ‘the walls of our houses on inner sides…be either hanged with tapisserie, arras work or painted cloths….’37 The arrival of the Renaissance generated a mass of literature on etiquette and fashion which appears to have swept the Hassells along.38 Concurrent with this cultural rebirth, Lena Orlin stated that the Reformation introduced the concept of venerating one’s household, which created consequences for privacy and personal affairs.39 I propose one aspect of that veneration was the further spiritualisation of space, beyond the simple exhibition of ornament, and reflective of a desire for inner grace.

36 M. Howard, ‘Self-fashioning and the classical moment in mid-sixteenth-century English architecture’ in L. Gent and N. Llewellyn (eds), Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture, c.1540-1660 (London, 1990), pp.198-217.
38 For instance: D. Erasmus, The Civilitie of Childehode with the Discipline and Institucione of Children (1560); B. Castiglione, The Courtier of Count Baltassar Castilia Devided into Four Books (London, 1561); J. Cleland, Hero-Paideia: or the Institution of a Young Nobleman (Oxford, 1607); R. Brathwayt, The English Gentleman: Containing Sundry Excellent Rules or Exquisite Observations, Tending to Direction of Every Gentleman of Selecter Ranke and Qualitie, How to Demeane or Accommodate Himselfe in the Manage of Publike or Private Affaires (London, 1630); H. Peacham, The Compleat Gentleman (London, 1622).
Agnes Hassell

Agnes’ portrait is encircled by oak leaves which in turn are framed by a twisted rope. The voids in each corner of the panel are filled with an arrangement of oak leaves with a juniper berry located at their centre, reflected in John’s panel. Juniper was laden with early modern symbolism, borrowed from folk culture and Christianity, and as the most widespread tree in Europe this may have helped account for the range of virtues and powers attributed to it.40

It was used as an apotropaic symbol. Its smoke ensured protection against sorcery, and across Europe it helped prevent the entrance of, or cast out, witches.41 Medicinally, its juice served both as a contraceptive and abortifacient and was considered a defence against plague, while burning it within a room cleansed the air of infection, particularly during epidemics.42

It was also used in a conflation of pre-Christian and Christian practice. As a precursor to observations on the combination of varied rituals in forthcoming chapters, Robert Scribner noted that juniper branches were sometimes employed in conjunction with making the sign of the cross as a tool in domestic invocation.43

---

41 M. Draco and P Harriss, Root and Branch. British Magical Tree Lore (London, 2002), p.64.
Plate 4 illustrates the fireplace on the first floor at Anglesey Abbey in Lode. The juniper is featured with acanthus or oak in a similar arrangement to that found in the woodcarvings in Bottisham Place, Plate 5.

As well as the breadth of its meaning, so its breadth of application is noteworthy. Anglesey Abbey, a medieval priory converted into a dwelling in the seventeenth century, is less than two miles from Bottisham Place, and the architectural flourishes employed on several of its fireplaces closely reflect those in Bottisham. This example illustrates how readily architecture transcended the borders of social status - and indeed geographical boundaries - as craftsmen plied their trades, irrespective of their physical locations. In Germany congregations of masons saw attendees travel more than 300 miles. John Harvey considered it entirely plausible therefore that similar gatherings were held in England. However, despite the spread and development of style, the architectural ripple effect was neither linear nor comprehensive, and the speed of change throughout the period varied.

Nevertheless, despite their awareness of contemporary art and their modern attitude towards family, it would appear that the Hassells were also expressing their ideals of purity, possibly as a stand against the modern approach to life. By the early Protestant period such traditionally Catholic principles as chastity, expressed by juniper, were waning significantly. This rear-guard action was therefore a sign not only of the

---

44 As with Tardieu’s chart illustrating the evolution and sustained use of furniture styles, so the juniper berry on oak leaf detail appears to have been fashionable for several generations.
Hassells’ sometimes modish, but conversely sometimes passé, sense of fashion, but also of their moral rectitude.

It is suggested that the catalyst for these carvings was the birth of Rycharde, their first grandson, and hoped-for heir. Material commemorations for births were not unknown. Anne Boleyn had a commemorative medal of herself struck in 1534, probably to honour the impending birth of her first son.48 Houlbrooke stated that grandchildren, who represented the future direction of the family, and the main hope of sustaining the name, were often regarded with notable affection.49

Historians disagree over the risks associated with giving birth in the period, and the numbers of women and children who died. Laurence Stone considered it was notoriously dangerous, and that midwives lacked knowledge and were poorly trained. They often botched the job, while the lack of basic hygiene meant that puerperal fever was a frequent companion.50 There is however disagreement on this point. While Houlbrooke did not mention the midwives’ abilities he believed that childbirth might have been only slightly more dangerous than it is today, and despite minor complications and abnormalities which introduced greater risk, he considered that child-bearers’ mortality rates of 2.5% were plausible for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.51 Ian Mortimer suggested that even fewer women - only one in 50 – may have died giving birth in the 1550s.52 Conversely however, Lyndal Roper suggested that a woman had as much as a six or seven per cent chance of dying in childbirth, an experience which filled many women with fear.53 Nevertheless, regardless of the percentages J.A. Sharpe stated that such a buoyant birth-rate meant that a large proportion of the population was very young.54 Still, anything to help protect the child

48 A. Fraser, The Six Wives of Henry VIII (London, 1992), p.203. The medal bears the motto ‘A.R. The Moost Happi’. Fraser appeared to suggest that Anne’s happiness was incomplete with a ‘mere daughter to support her’. The portrait is three-quarter or ‘Flemish’ and is fleetingly reminiscent of Agnes, carved 30 years later.
50 Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage, p.64.
51 Houlbrooke, The English Family, p.129.
and its mother both during and after the birth process would have been (sorely) welcomed.

The creation of the portrait roundels was therefore a poignant and fashionable expression of love between a husband and wife, between them and their son and daughter-in-law and between them and their first grandson.

It is thus clear that during the mid sixteenth century juniper was pregnant with symbolism. The Hassells would have undoubtedly been aware of its multiple references. While there is no evidence of the occasion of the christening of Rycharde, other than the record in the baptism register, observations made by several historians suggest that gifts for such an event may have included porringer and bowl mounted on coral for the baby to cut his teeth on, and given to help protect him from witchcraft – again, reflective of one of Juniper’s many attributes.

The leaves upon which the juniper berries rest, and with which the portrait is garlanded, appear to be from the oak, the largest and longest lived of Britain’s native trees. In folklore the oak was virtuous and represented strength, bravery, trust and honour. In combination with juniper it suggests that despite their artistic and sartorial awareness and developing status, the Hassells’ break with the old ways remained far from complete.

The clothing they wear also contains non-verbal messages. Agnes wears a relatively high necked dress, a flat bonnet with a caul overlaying it, and a billiment holding it all in place. Among the aristocracy this form of headwear was usually lavishly adorned with jewels, and as such it reflects the wealth and aspiration of the owner. Tarnya Cooper noted that contemporary narratives associated pride in smart clothing with the aspiration to own and display one’s portrait.

---

55 Rycharde Hassell was baptised on March 30, 1564. Cambridgeshire CRO P/13/1/1.
58 Ibid., p.104.
A near contemporary of the Hassells, Robert Cowdrey stated that a woman should not wear ‘apparel beyond her degree and place but that her attire be comely and sober, according to her calling’.60 This comment, and his book generally, was a response to the aspirational attitudes of women - and men - like the Hassells. During the period, jewellery that adorned a wealthy individual was however nearly invisible against the wealth of ornaments sewn onto the clothing.61 There are (possibly originally red and white Tudor) roses in evidence at the end of the billiment and attached to Agnes’ gown, which may have reflected her loyalty to Queen Elizabeth. In this association they are also representative of virginity,62 and whilst it would have been madness for John and Agnes to claim an immaculate conception on behalf of their daughter-in-law, the message contained within the roses, and reinforced by the juniper, is one of an impeccable sexual reputation, both for mother and mother-in-law.

However, the rose motif might also be representative of something altogether less fragrant. In reference to a painting by a follower of Holbein, in which the Cunningtons considered the merits of the headdress, they noted that ‘it has posies of flowers to smell at….two or three stuck in their breasts’,63 which were employed to mask unpleasant odours. Sanitation was almost non-existent and the very top of society was no better practiced than the bottom. A century after the Hassells had passed away, it is recorded that when the court of Charles II vacated the Oxford colleges in which they had sought refuge from the plague in 1665, they left their excrement ‘in every corner, in chimneys, studies, coal-houses, cellars’.64 And almost 100 years after Charles’ vacation, Dr. Johnson described London as a city straining under the weight of so much waste ‘as a savage would look on with amazement’.65

Whatever the case it appears that Agnes chose to be represented wearing an expensive dress with integral flag-waving motifs, to express her political and religious affiliations, her purity and that of her daughter-in-law, and as a foil against unwholesome smells. In

62 In correspondence with Gillian Stapleton, costume historian, December, 2012.
64 Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage, p.62.
65 Ibid., p.63.
essence, the clothing expressed various astute and practical messages, and projected wealth, status and style in a way entirely legible to all who visited the newly finished hall.

John Hassell

In his portrait John wears a high collared shirt with a robe over his shoulders, fixed by a rose shaped clasp. His headwear is the artistic equal of his wife’s with a feather in his cap, reflective of portraits of Henry VIII twenty years earlier, though it was still fashionable. The Cunningtons illustrated the point with plates from 1540 and 1541 with men wearing flat caps, feathers and a medallion.66 However, like the couple’s attitude towards sexual morality, his choice of headwear was soon to be passé. The cap gave way to an increased height in the crown and near the end of the century tall hats had become the most fashionable styles.67 John’s beard was perhaps fashionable in the same way that parents consider themselves en vogue when their children clearly see they are not. Certainly it was not a fashion amongst the younger generation, but more reflective of those in their later years,68 and at 44 when their first grandson was born John - and Agnes - were well into middle age.

The Putti

Being central to the arrangement clearly suggests that as well as a neat visual harmony, the meaning of the putti was pivotal to the narrative of the panels. They are of a physically naïve, perhaps even grotesque form, commensurate with the fashion, and clearly emphasize the Christianity of the couple and the protection afforded them from on high.

66 Cunnington, Handbook of English Costume, pp.20, 22.
67 Ibid., p.131.
68 In correspondence with Stapleton, December, 2012.
Family Life

In Renaissance Italy during the same period painted portraits were being relocated from secured rooms to reception rooms. Peter Thornton noted that they had become a powerful source of propaganda illustrating the power and influence of the family. They were sometimes commissioned to reflect personal change, when individuals changed roles within a domestic or public context. Whilst the roundels might be considered ostensibly a commemorative group to thank God for the safe delivery of both grandchild and daughter in law, and representative of a change in the patrons’ personal lives, they were also designed to express more than a simple thanksgiving. Tarnya Cooper stated that portraits served the personal purpose of ‘fixing aspects of their achievement and lineage….while also offering opportunities for contemplation and personal reflection’. David Smith summed it up by stating that portraiture was closely bound to the ‘imagery of social encounter’.

Historians such as Catherine Busse believed that children were considered commodities in the later sixteenth century, though the attitude was not universal. In support of the general principle however, Houlbrooke stated that during the period familial arrangements had evolved to include three forms of kinship, which were nurtured and maintained for business and legal purposes, as well as for the benefits afforded by a form of social security. The three forms included shared blood relationships, those forged by marriage and those supported by spiritual kinship, in which those involved in the baptism and confirmation of a child took a part in their life. Given that it was not unusual for close kin to be involved in a child’s welfare it comes as no surprise that John and Agnes should commemorate the birth of their first grandchild with the creation of these roundels. The couple married sometime in the first half of the sixteenth century, though no record of this event has been discovered. Lawrence Stone noted that

---

71 D.R. Smith, *Masks of Wedlock – Seventeenth Century Dutch Marriage Portraiture* (1978; Epping, 1982), p.5. While this quote is in reference to Dutch oil painting, the message it is expressing is universal, and given the spatial, temporal, cultural and religious proximities between Holland and England its employment is apt.
73 Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, p.44.
‘Property and power were the predominant issues which governed negotiations for marriage’.74 Clearly this property, and the carved panelling, were designed to impress not only their new daughter-in-law and her family, but to reinforce the suitability of the match arranged between them and her representatives.

Both the Royal Commission and English Heritage suggested that the farmhouse was extended to the north in the later sixteenth century, and again in the seventeenth century. The extension of the family, with the marriage of the younger John might well have sparked the building program. Certainly, the increase in habitable space was undertaken for practical purposes, if for no other. The elder John passed away in 1572, and Agnes three years later with their legacy, a statement of power, status and pride, assured.

Fundamental to the original significance and meaning of the roundels was their initial location. The Royal Commission described them as an ‘overmantle’ and the list entry furthered the description by stating that they were probably reset.75 It is suggested, in light of other examples of medallions, including those in Fen Ditton, (considered further on) that these carvings were originally situated above the new brick fireplace in the hall, which would have been underdrawn by a ceiling, the result of the new first floor.

In Johnson’s terms this room had become closed, segregating the individuals within the house, so that staff and householders came into less frequent contact. The householders were innately aware of the implicit meaning of locating the panels in this new space, the material pre-conditions having acted to amplify the significance of the room. William Hillier and Julienne Hanson stated that architecture configures space, and by so doing, it relates directly to the lived experience, since it provides the physical pre-conditions and constraints for domestic choreography, involving encounter and avoidance as well as a catalyst for social relations.76 Thus, the implication of this circular observation, also noted previously by Moore, is that space enables domestic culture, which in turn allows for the possibility of the evolution of that space. The result of this activity is the

74 Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage, pp.70, 71.
75 Spittle (ed.), An Inventory by the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, p.9; English Heritage List Entry no. 1127112.
indivisibility of people and space, action and reaction and, in this research, the profane and sacred.

During the sixteenth century the ratio of the length of the dwelling to its width would have been greater than 2:1, a common proportion for the period.\textsuperscript{77} Long halls emphasized the distinction between the high and low ends of the room and Bryony McDonagh suggested that their popularity reflected the increasing sense of hierarchy and separation.\textsuperscript{78} John Hassell’s semi-private hall would have been filled with the items of everyday living including a table, chair, stools and a cupboard. Candlesticks were present and silver salt cellars and spoons were commonly witnessed.\textsuperscript{79} A hall was surely therefore a suitable location for such splendid carvings, centre stage in a room principal to the lives and beliefs of this man and his castle.

The Defacement of John and Agnes

At some stage the carvings were defaced. The portraits appear simply to have had their noses sliced off. However, the studied and comprehensive nature of the removal of the central image, which both the Royal Commission and English Heritage consider to have been a shield, suggests more effort was used in its removal, not simply due to its relative size, but perhaps because its meaning implied something more offensive to the perpetrator. There are five possible scenarios concerning the vandalism.

The Family of Love

It is fair to surmise that the Hassells were well educated. Their inquisitive nature, and conscientious collection and retention of a myriad legal and social documents over five

\textsuperscript{77} B.A.K. McDonagh, ‘Manor Houses, Churches and Settlements: Historical Geographies of the Yorkshire Wolds Before 1600’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2007), p.163. For a discussion on the relative proportions of the hall in the later medieval period see pp.158-180.

\textsuperscript{78} J. Grenville, Medieval Housing (London, 1997), p.109, in McDonagh, ‘Manor Houses, Churches and Settlements’, p.163.

\textsuperscript{79} M. Parker, All My Worldly Goods, II (St. Albans, 2004). This review of inventories and wills centres on a parish in the neighbouring county of Hertfordshire. The will of John Hassell mentions none of these accoutrements and his inventory has not been discovered.
centuries, may mutually have had their intellectual origins in the nature of their forebears who, by the sixteenth century were surreptitiously questioning the very nature of their relationship with God. In the roundels, the juniper berries and putti illustrate the conflation of symbolism, and their location the apparent confidence of expressing the possible incongruity, a leitmotif which runs through this research. In an age when cunning men, witches and astrologers inhabited the world, some even being retained at the Royal Court, such an approach to belief was anything but unique - and the questioning nature of man, heightened in the minds of the Hassells, sought answers.

In observing the population of the fen edge, Margaret Spufford noted the concentration of dissenters one hundred years after our period, on the basis of the Compton Census of 1676. She also noted that in various fen edge villages non-conformity played a key role in 1640, as it did in 1676. Nevertheless, whilst this trajectory continued, there is little evidence of a pattern of any form of dissent in the century prior to this.

In 1580 Bishop Cox named Thomas Lawrence (the father in law of John Hassell), as a Familist, and John’s brother Richard was also considered a Familist, originally a Dutch group established by Hendrick Niclaes. Despite external propaganda, the group saw themselves neither as a sect nor as subversive, but they expressed a very deep commitment to God which they believed was not found elsewhere. Niclaes offered two quite different, but apparently compatible approaches to his philosophy which described the inward and the outward man. The activities of the Familists in England

---

81 John Hassell married Ellen Lawrence in 1595, and was executor to Thomas Lawrence’s will in 1608. Richard Hassell’s will opened with the same very distinctive preamble as Thomas Lawrence’s, in 1618, and his daughter Margaret married William Rule, the godson of Thomas Lawrence, in 1603. Marsh, *The Family of Love*, p.280; Cambridgeshire CRO, Balsham parish register, 1558-1812. Spool no. 1040403; Bishop Cox’s Letters Book, Gonville and Caius College, University of Cambridge, MS 53/30, Fols. 72-73 (1580).
83 The word ‘Sect’ was commonly used by hostile writers in the sixteenth century who sought ‘to spark associations with subversiveness and social evil.’ Marsh, *The Family of Love*, pp.4, 47.
84 This is intriguing, as Niclaes’ quite different but apparently mutually co-operative approaches reflected the approach to belief that many adopted, in which a conflation of magic and Christianity worked side by side. Mention of the ‘inward and outward man’ simply reinforces the parallels, in which domestic invocation was quite different from the actions of an individual within the confines of the parish church.
probably began in the 1550s, though the English precedents for its evolution are unclear because Niclaes’ works had evolved from a very different context in Holland.  

The group appears to have been centred in Balsham, to the south-east of Cambridge, though there were also local centres in Ely and Wisbech. Christopher Marsh’s research revealed a small, intimate group of like-minded people, rather than a significant organisation. However, despite their limited number Queen Elizabeth, and later on James I, employed Familists in their courts as Yeomen of the Guard, and officers of the Jewel House, Armoury and Wardrobe. Nonetheless, by the later sixteenth century the Familists’ reputation and a concern over their influence resulted in an edict in 1570 from Elizabeth which condemned them and their writings, following a determined effort by the state to eradicate them from East Anglia a decade previously, perhaps because, despite their apparently limited acceptance in society, their influence was disproportionately greater than the sum of their number.

One of The Family’s tenets was that perfection came from living life as Christ, who was considered to be within every believer, and that a perfect state ensured salvation that neither the Church nor the scriptures could guarantee. As the inward man approached perfection in his spiritual life, so the outward man had to remain modest, quiet and obedient, loving even his enemies. Essentially, the outward man remained beneath the level of observation, going about his business in a way that upset neither the religious authorities nor secular.

The two sides of this idealised Familist character could well describe the lives of Rycharde and John Hassell. Involvement in the church, though by no means overbearing, ensured the outward man remained obedient and appropriate to his sort and, on his passing, the gift of money to the poor furthered his image as a good

---

86 *Ibid.*, p.7. However, not all commentators agreed that the group was small. ‘The hostile writer John Rogers estimated in 1579 that there were 1000 members...though this can have been little more than a guess.’ p.7.
Protestant, generous but without recourse to self-promotion.\textsuperscript{90} In the meantime, the inner man prayed at home, and questioned God and his relationship to Him. It is notable by their inclusion in the parish registers throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the Hassells were evidently conformable Protestants in their religious affiliations and practices but, by their short term involvement in roles in church authority, they did not seek to draw needless attention to themselves either through avoidance or frenetic community activity.\textsuperscript{91} In short, they blended in.

They attended church on a Sunday, though they also attended more furtive gatherings with a different religious agenda, possibly in their own home, as a messianic, even mystical, experience.\textsuperscript{92} According to contemporary critics The Family met in secret, at people’s homes, though detractors, even including close allies of John Knewstub, the vehemently anti-Familist preacher, accepted that their meetings did not involve receiving the sacraments or delivering formal sermons. That is not to say however that they did not practice formality. Marsh asserted that they read aloud to one another including from the scriptures and, when in discrete family groups, rather than collectively as The Family of Love, they read formal prayers, in much the same way as Rcharde Whytforde proposed good Catholics should do, a generation previously.\textsuperscript{93}

As a backdrop to this everyday activity, it can be seen that the carved medallions would have acted as stage scenery for Familists studying the bible, as well as interactions with extended kin, friends and business partners. The roundels would have elicited outward admiration, though of course it is feasible that inward admonition was also felt. An ill-thought expressed in the village community and the spread of rumour like wildfire would have carried the information to the local agitator, perhaps at the time of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{90} TNA, PROB 11/135/137, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{91} Marsh, \textit{The Family of Love}, p.235. Rcharde Hassell was churchwarden in 1573, and his son John was warden from 1602 to 1604, and again in 1614. Edward, the son of John Hassell the younger, went to Cambridge University and eventually became the vicar of Middleton Cheney in Northamptonshire. (The brother of John Hassell the elder was a vicar at Milton, but there is no suggestion that he was a member of The Family. It is noted also that members of the Newman family were involved in the daily life of the parish church to a great extent during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but the evidence suggests that they were either distantly related to the then current residents of Bottisham 1 during the period, or were as yet unrelated.)}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{92} In letters from the eighteenth century various religious sympathisers addressed letters to ‘Friend Dennis’ and ‘Brother Dennis’, signifying a religious affiliation commonly used in connection with non-Conformists.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{93} Marsh, \textit{The Family of Love}, pp.4, 91; See p.15.}
Elizabeth’s edict of 1570, when the carvings were still new, and The Family were continuing to develop. In this first scenario, the damage visited upon the carvings reflects the reproach of the religious authorities to any form of imagery considered idolatrous. The portraits were carved during a period coincident with the increasing breadth of definitions of iconolatry, including even portraits of ostensibly non-religious characters in domestic settings. The extent of defacement was limited and studied, rather than careless and wholesale, and the removal of the noses and the obliteration of the shield arguably suggests a metaphorical attempt at familial extinction, commensurate with the spirit of the edict.

William Dowsing

The second possible scenario concerns William Dowsing, who had been hired by the Earl of Manchester, Captain General of the Eastern Association during the Civil War, to remove all imagery from churches that were considered idolatrous, by ordinance of Parliament. Dowsing visited Cambridge at various times during 1643, in pursuit of his task.94 Portraits created for the decoration of homes were considered acceptable in the late sixteenth century, as William Perkins made clear.95 However, Margaret Aston illustrated the paradoxes and continually developing meaning of domestic portraiture, which meant that by the mid seventeenth century such images were once again a cause for concern. She considered that in contemplating one’s forbears, family pride could be generated. ‘When we look at such devotion, the line between religious and secular begins to look razor-fine’.96

Whilst the early part of Dowsing’s diary is rather chaotic, by the time he arrived in the area his thoughts and his diary were collected, though his approach was sometimes only loosely reflective of the requirements of the ordinance. For example, in regard to carved angels, which were intended to be broken or removed, they remained extant in 24 of the churches he visited in Cambridgeshire whilst tombs, which were expressly omitted from

the order, were damaged. Despite no documentary primary evidence that this was carried out strictly at his behest, the circumstantial evidence is tantalizing. Furthermore, superstitious inscriptions, traditionally associated with tombs, contributed substantially to the items described in his journal.97 The inscription on a monument to two of the children of George Allington which features cherubims was destroyed, though relatively carefully. While Dowsing was not known for the delicacy with which he undertook his work, it is nevertheless not a unique example of the care that sometimes accompanied the activity. However, R.F. McNeile’s unsupported observation that Dowsing was not above ‘accepting a little judicious persuasion in certain cases to abstain from extreme action’ should be treated with caution.98 Of the various sections of the diary that he omitted for one reason or another, there is a noticeable gap during which time he could have travelled through Bottisham. There is, nevertheless, little evidence that he visited the parish,99 though this is contested, as John Morrill considered that Dowsing rode through the northern parishes and exited via Bottisham on his way to Brinkley.100 Dowsing’s diary accounted for 85 villages, with approximately 70 left unaccounted. He is known to have stayed overnight in several of the parishes when, presumably, he felt that he would not have reached Cambridge in good time. On January 3, 1643 he visited the churches in Fen Ditton, Swaffham Prior, Burwell and Swaffham Bulbeck, before heading back to Cambridge. On March 26 he was again in the east, this time at Stow cum Quy, and Great and Little Wilbraham. Trevor Cooper suggested that Dowsing was by this time mopping up the few churches which he had had no time to attend to previously.101 During both visits Bottisham was essentially en route. Certainly, had he by-passed it on the way to the Swaffhams, it would have only been a mile distant.

He was at once both a bureaucratic ‘model of Puritan vandalism’ according to various authors, and at the same time a somewhat free-spirited individual to whom Parliamentary Ordinances were effectively guidelines.102 In support of the case

illustrating both a busy individual and one unaware of the term ‘completer – finisher’, he left instructions in Cambridgeshire with 14 pairs of churchwardens, seven ministers, one overseer, one sequestrator and others to complete the work.103 If Bottisham parish church was left to the local churchwardens to purify, the question arises as to whether they knew in advance of John Hassell’s portraits, and sought them out for attention. Of course, as one of the largest houses in the village and situated immediately on the Cambridge Road, it may have been that Dowsing himself visited the property to stay the night.

Certainly, the definition of iconoclasm had evolved during this period to include secular buildings, though dwellings themselves were not included. Nevertheless, Catholic properties were searched, initially informally by soldiers in 1642, and then following Parliamentary Ordinances of March and August 1643, which probably accounted for a broad swathe of destruction. As an example, Sir William Springett destroyed his colleagues’ religious pictures though his actions were outside the bounds of even the most radical of the ordinances.104 Further circumstantial evidence is to be found in the Abbott’s lodging in Thame Park in Oxfordshire where the panelling, installed c.1530 by Robert King, had also been defaced. Interestingly, while his name and his mitre remained in situ, his coat of arms were removed.105 The fact that this panelling had been damaged is pertinent in light of the view of the Royal Commission and English Heritage that the panel in Bottisham had probably contained a shield, presumably as part of a coat of arms. Coincidence must always be acknowledged, but it is nevertheless tantalizing to consider that further damage to other aspects of both John Hassell’s and Robert King’s carvings was avoided.

Whilst it is accepted that Dowsing stayed in individuals’ homes during his visitations, it is also accepted that there is no primary evidence of his personal involvement in domestic defacement;106 but of course, that does not mean that it did not occur, particularly as the east of England was a regional centre for popular iconoclasm. As an


104 J. Spraggon, Puritan Iconoclasm During the Civil War (Woodbridge, 2003), p.118.


106 Spraggon, Puritan Iconoclasm, p.118.
example, on the eve of the Civil War in Long Melford in Suffolk, people rifled through the minister’s house for ‘his Gods’, images that he may previously have removed from church, which were then publically denounced. Thus, it is suggested Dowsing’s record of any potentially troubling domestic destruction, which may have served to implicate him in activity beyond the bounds of even the most casual interpretation of the ordinances, particularly in regard to the homes of the parish elite, who may have considered litigation, was selective and incomplete.

Intriguingly, a property at Fen Ditton, three miles distant, features a similar pair of roundels with carved panelling, though the damage witnessed in this instance is to the wall panels, rather than the roundels. This property is considered further on.

Will of John Hassell the Elder

The third possibility concerns a family dispute. The will of the patriarch, enacted in 1572 when he died, involved giving much of his landholding to Rycharde and the younger John. It is significant that he willed his tenements in Bottisham and Stow cum Quy to Rycharde, and this is stated in the first seven or eight lines of the will, immediately following the recently adopted Protestant preamble. Rycharde was to receive the land and tenements in these villages, along with all the horses and cattle. John the elder also willed the house at Swaffham Prior to his wife with a note that, if she chose to sell, then the first offer must be made to Rycharde. What is notable in all this is that Rycharde was not the first born - he was preceded by John, three years earlier, in 1542.

Later it is noted that John the elder willed his lands and tenements in Wilbraham Parva to young John. However, following closely behind was the cautionary note:- ‘Except the said John do molest trouble…(indecipherable)… Agnes his mother or his brother Rycharde…(indecipherable)…then I will he shall not have the tenements and land…which I late bought of Robert Olyver but I give them unto Rycharde my son his

---

heirs and assigns forever’. Houlbrooke considered that in relation to the wills of great
landowners provision was contingent upon personal affection, but primarily on the
ability to accumulate wealth, though the first-born son also carried with him both ethical
and practical responsibilities to his siblings. The patriarch of the family might
therefore have considered these characteristics somewhat lacking in his first born son,
who would have lived under the same roof as his immediate family, and followed in his
father’s footsteps as a farmer. While there is no evidence of a contested will, it was not
uncommon, and the distrust between a parent and child was frequently acrimonious and
enduring. It is interesting to note that the younger John’s own son, also John - the
grandson of the patriarch and the probable catalyst for the creation of the roundels - died
in the same year as his grandfather. It is at least possible that the younger John was
sufficiently upset at the death of his own son at the age of eight, and suitably annoyed
by his father’s behaviour, the dismissive nature of the will and his subsequent removal
from Bottisham, that he took his anger out on the roundels, symbols not only of familial
success but an obvious, perhaps rather too proud visual reminder of his father. Thomas
More’s observation that the dead were protectors of the living, and a belief that their
continued presence (amplified in this instance by the carved portraits) acted as an
endorsement against shameful behaviour, sits rather awkwardly as a backdrop to this
particular dispute. Certainly, damaging church monuments occurred quite frequently,
but against the person it would have been considered a serious slight. The carvings
probably remained in the hall at this date, which implies that friends and associates
would have been aware of them, and the message of familial discord, which could
hardly have been expressed more clearly.

There is however an alternative reason for the dispute which might have centred less
upon inadequate business acumen and more upon religious dissent. Certainly there is
evidence that individuals from conformable Protestant families converted to
Catholicism, which resulted in disinherition, whether partial or complete. It is thus

108 TNA, PROB 11/54/371, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury.
110 L. Bonfield, Devising, Dying and Dispute. Probate Litigation in Early Modern England (Farnham, 2012),
p.206.
quite feasible that a religious split in the Hassell’s household resulted not only in disinherintance, but in vandalism.

Fraudulent Coat of Arms

A fourth possible reason for the defacement of the carvings concerns a fraud. Had the central panel been adorned with an ill-founded or unproven coat of arms, it may have come to light following a heraldic visitation, which may subsequently have required its eradication. Leslie Pine stated that individuals who lived in the style of a gentleman were permitted to bear coats of arms but others, who lived less lavishly, were not.113 A visitation was undertaken in Cambridgeshire in 1619, and whilst executed by Henry St. George, the mayor of Cambridge and Alderman William Hassell and others accompanied him. However, there was no further mention made of the Hassell family, suggesting no coats or arms, no claims made, and no issue to answer.114

The final, rather prosaic possible cause of the defacement involves the passing of time, a possible lack of respect and the fashionable mores of the Georgians.

Papering Over the Cracks

The roundels were at some date relocated to the first floor chamber above the original parlour, perhaps in reaction to the evolving closure of space. Had the carvings passed their sell by date, it is fair to assume they would have been replaced. The possibility exists that in creating a greater degree of privacy within the upper chambers, their personal message became more pertinent simply to the householders than a gathered audience in the shared space, though social withdrawal from the hall did not automatically indicate its decline as the communal arena.115

114 H. St. George, _The Cambridge Visitation by Henry St. George, 1619_, ed. T. Phillips (1619; London, 1840). Of the families in Bottisham, Alington, Pledgerd and Webbe were visited, though only the first two bore coats of arms. No page no.
115 McDonagh, ‘Manor Houses, Churches and Settlements’, p.229.
As the family grew and the law of primogeniture dissolved, so the family name of Hassell changed and, despite never having sold the house, between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries Bottisham Place was to be home to the Dennises, Mayhews and Pauls.

Paint analysis was carried out on four separate areas of the panels, including on the nose and cheek of John’s portrait, and on the horizontal mid rail and top rail.116 The results were tantalizing, but ultimately inconclusive. In such an early wood carving the paint historian Catherine Hassell (apparently no relation) expected to discover in excess of 20 layers of paint, though she discovered only four – with three on the flattened surface of the nose. The base coat may have featured a thin glazed finish, over a ‘pinkish buff top coat of red and yellow ochres and lead white’, suggestive of graining, which she considered appropriate for the date of its creation. The second layer, the first applied following the defacement, provided no clues as to the date of its application. Hassell cautiously suggested that it might date to the early eighteenth century, but was uncertain. It is this inconclusiveness that leaves the door open to the suggestions previously stated, particularly the potential visit of Dowsing less than a century before Catherine Hassell’s estimated date for the application of the second layer of paint.

During the seventeenth or eighteenth century, the room was treated to a redecoration. The family who lived there at this time remained wealthy. However, in terms of their aesthetic sensibilities, their desire for redecorating an upstairs chamber seemed rather lacking. The original layer of grained glaze had remained the finished surface for possibly more than 150 years. It was eventually superseded by the pale stone coloured pigment, which consisted of lead and a small quantity of ochre.

However, it is between these two layers of paint and the two somewhat indeterminate dates that the introduction of wall paper might have occurred. Evidence can be found at the top of the panelling and below the cornice, of a rhythmic pattern of nail heads, in many places pinning what appears to be a 1” strip of fabric uniformly in place.

116 Analysis carried out by Catherine Hassell, paint historian, in February, 2013.
Plate 6 showing over-painted nail heads fixing a line of cloth.

The nails appear on each of the four walls, contributing to the theory that it was a comprehensive scheme of redecoration, rather than application to a single wall. The relevance of this theory concerns the potential protrusion of the original noses and the shield beyond the plane of the rail’s surface. Had these individual elements extended too far beyond the framing, then it is reasonable to assume their points might have been removed for the sake of uniformity; and thus, with their removal go the preceding theories of conflict.

The act of vandalism is itself brutish, but it is the fascinating possibility of the acquiescence of the owners to the undertaking of such work which intrigues, and furthers the debate on meaning. The act of covering up the portraits of the probably by then rather distant and long-dead relatives was an acknowledgement that at that date, in the later early modern period, in which the effects of the Enlightenment and the influences of continental architecture and art were taking a firmer hold, the family had changed to the point at which memory did not serve, and it was therefore considered acceptable to paper over the past. Something so overtly English and possibly so archaic might well have caused mild embarrassment, so despite its once fashionable style and proud expression, the time had come for family respect and loyalty to past generations to give way to fashion. The hessian-backed wallpaper might itself have been removed when the last coat of paint was applied, at some time between 1828 and 1950. It is notable too that the possible date for the papering of the early eighteenth century might coincide with the date of the creation of the medical note book by an unknown member of the family, a man embracing the fashions of the Enlightenment.

Notwithstanding the various likelihoods, a note of caution remains to be sounded. The evidence for each of the alternatives is circumstantial, and prior to concluding that the
re-decoration of the chamber was the cause of the defacement, the door to the alternative possibilities should remain open. It appears that there was little structural justification for the removal of so much of the central motif and the initials, in attempting to regularise the finished surface. The attention paid to these elements of the carving is clearly excessive, which continues to beg the question ‘why’?

**Home Farm, High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton**

This case study considers the messages contained within the second portrait medallions, similar to those at Bottisham Place, and fundamental to the expressive significance of the interior of this house. However, in this instance the pair remain in situ, in pride of place in the early modern hall. The house is described as early seventeenth century by the Royal Commission and English Heritage describe sixteenth-century panelling re-set in the hall and seventeenth-century panelling in the parlour.\(^{117}\)

Illustration 4 showing the three cell plan with an early kitchen block to the north. The Romayne carvings are circled in red, and the overmantle in green.

![Diagram of Home Farm](image)

However, for a structure so refined in its finish, an overt reflection of the status and cultural awareness of the owners, the application of re-set, perhaps even passé panelling with end medallions and Renaissance-style heads, would appear a little odd. Certainly the message it would have presented to its audience would have made an impact, though probably not that intended.

\(^{117}\) English Heritage List Entry no. 1331303
The extent of linenfold panels, the dentillated eaves and the decorated brackets imply their installation in a period before King James I, and it is fair to surmise that the medallions represented the owners or tenants.118

Plates 7a and 7b facing one another across the bresummer in the hall at Home Farm.

Their location is telling. Three bay lobby-entry dwellings such as this are of the closed type, and both the circulation pattern and social interaction were focused on the centre in this arrangement. It was conceptualised as an expression of the hierarchy of the members of the household, in contrast to the original planform in Bottisham which was open, less segregated and therefore arguably older fashioned.119

The previously exposed wattle and daub-filled timber frame, by this time simply an increasingly uncomfortable reminder of the vernacular, was fully masked by fine classically-influenced carving, neatly finished and resplendent, which served to consolidate views of the fireplace, and was exacerbated by the foliated brackets and medallions in a symmetrical arrangement reminiscent of the styles and symmetry of the

118 Stapleton considers their form and clothing representative of the later sixteenth century - c.1590 - as explained in correspondence, December, 2012.
Italian Renaissance. The patrons were citizens in an aspiring classical world, intent on articulating their status as worldly, affluent and fashionable.

Plate 8 illustrates the roundels, with linenfold panels and brackets between dentillation.

The language employed in this room is that of fashion. Whilst conscious reference to spirituality as considered in the previous chapter cannot fully be ruled out, on the surface at least any association appears to have been coerced to suit the requirements of fashion, idiosyncracy obliterated through the expression of English classicism. Nevertheless, sight should not be lost of the origins of classicism in Greek temple architecture, a point undoubtedly acknowledged by these patrons.120

This example is therefore representative of a cultural shift that was evident in certain circles, when the reliance on traditional expressions of domestic spirituality had, in a percentage of households, been put to one side in favour of the vivid architectural and cultural re-birth of the later sixteenth century. Others welcomed fashion as part of an overall scheme of expression, representative not only of the profane and sacred occupying the same domestic space, but of the evolving psychological landscape.

The use of a coif to cover the woman’s head was the identifiable dress of a scholar or artist, and may thus indicate the erudition of the woman.121 The University of Cambridge did not allow women to study, but her scholarship may have derived from an association with a personal tutor or an early monastic life. However, an alternative meaning may be less suggestive of the desire to express status, as the Cunningtons noted that coifs were rarely decorated before the 1550s, and were usually worn

121 As described by Stapleton in correspondence, December, 2012.
indoors.\textsuperscript{122} This observation suggests a less aspirational, rather more practical function, but it does appear at odds with its obvious intention to express prestige. The man’s headwear is reflective of an Italian nobleman’s in acknowledgement of the classical influence, and combined they reinforce the personal alliance between them, showcasing themselves, their perception of their status and their embracement of the new classicism.\textsuperscript{123}

In the parlour, located on the other side of the back to back fireplace, is an ornate carved overmantle and axial beam with lozenge decoration, supported on a fluted pilaster. This decoration is described as early seventeenth century and has not been re-set.\textsuperscript{124} The chronology is interesting. This room was redecorated perhaps two or three generations after the construction of the house, though it was probably not intended as the main room for entertainment and exhibition, given its access at the rear to the service rooms and detached kitchen beyond.\textsuperscript{125} The framing members would have remained visible in the room until the remodelling, at which point the surfaces became richly layered in contemporary carvings.

This re-invention of space clearly reflected the patrons’ desire to reinforce the fashionable and religious influences of the Renaissance in a contemporary manner, and in an idiom quite different from the hall, which saw little overt reference to the more idiosyncratic forms of religious expression considered in the following chapters. The evolution of fashion is seen here in the exuberant styling which features semi-circular arches decorated with floral roundels, and bordered by fronds of vegetation, with egg and dart rails beneath and dentil coursing above. Within this room is contained a detail reminiscent of that in Bottisham Place, which furthers debate on the involvement of the religious authorities in their zealous denunciation of iconoclasm. In these panels the terminal point of every frond has been neatly sliced off.

\textsuperscript{122} Cunnington, \textit{Handbook of English Costume in the Sixteenth Century}, p.82.
\textsuperscript{123} ‘The reigns of Elizabeth and James may have covered the English Renaissance, but the style of those years was not ‘Classical’ in the sense that the word has come to convey since Inigo Jones...’ T. Mowl, \textit{Elizabethan and Jacobean Style} (London, 1993), p.11.
\textsuperscript{124} English Heritage List Entry no. 1331303; A similar overmantle in Chawton, Hampshire was dendrochronologically dated to 1589-1625. Hall stated that its rounded arches were seen on countless ‘Jacobean’ pulpits throughout the country. L. Hall, ‘Fixtures and fittings’, in E. Roberts, J. Crook, L. Hall and D. Miles, \textit{Hampshire Houses, 1250-1700} (Winchester, 2003), pp.104-105.
\textsuperscript{125} As proposed by English Heritage in their listing and reminiscent in planform to 333 High Street, Cottenham, considered in the subsequent chapter on concealment.
Plate 9 showing the classical decoration, brackets verdant with foliated detail and the terminal points cleanly removed.

Plate 10 shows the base of the pendant at Home Farm. Plate 11 illustrates a detail from a property in Great Yarmouth, dated 1596.

One can only speculate as to its original design, but there are examples of similar panels with facial images from the same era. Plate 11 is from the north chamber of a high status property in Great Yarmouth, in Norfolk. At the base of each of the columns is an image of a green man, in an eclectic synthesis of modern and pre-Christian, a combination of the contemporary fashion of classicism and village custom, seen in countless churches across East Anglia and evidence of the religious patchwork that

126 C.J. Palmer, Illustrations of Domestic Architecture in England During the Reign of Queen Elizabeth (London, 1838), pl.29. Palmer assures us that the decoration within the rooms ‘are beautiful specimens of the style which derived both its origins and its name from the reign of Queen Elizabeth’. pp.13, 14.
defined the attitudes of many. It is also, notably, a reflection of the conflation of details employed by the Hassells in the design of their roundels.127

A final observation concerns the connotations between the arch-carved reliefs, reminiscent of classical Greek temple architecture, stylized and overtly spiritual, and the damage visited upon them. It may be that the authorities’ broadening understanding of iconoclasm, and as a result its expanded remit, ensured these carvings were selectively damaged, in a similar way to those in Bottisham.

The Hall, Station Road, Waterbeach

The last of the three properties in the study area to employ decorative panelling in semi-private space is situated immediately opposite the parish church in Waterbeach. The shift from more overt expressions of status, towards the inwardly spiritual is evidenced in this example, a single panel over a fireplace. The property is of similar status and age to that in Fen Ditton and features a three-bay kitchen plan. The panelling to the hall is recognisably similar to the previous in its overarching form, though its detailed ornament is more restrained, reminiscent of designs on Elizabethan court cupboards.128

Illustration 5 showing the early modern planform of three cells with cross passage and applied panelling over the fireplace, circled red.

Not to scale

127 ‘The Tudor relationship with the animal world was intimate, and incestuous in simile, metaphor and graven image’. Mowl, Elizabethan and Jacobean Style, p.18.
Plate 12 illustrates the similarity in the basic layout of the panel in a style very strongly associated with the turn of the seventeenth century.

Shallow brackets between the panels have been replaced with broad pilasters with detailed ionic capitals, though the arches themselves continue to sit upon small plinths. This panel stands over the fireplace in isolation, rather than as part of a scheme of work, and it is perhaps for this reason that it is considered to have been re-used from the reredos of the church opposite. English Heritage does not dispute the claim. Nevertheless, it is strikingly similar in its general form to that in Fen Ditton, which is not considered to be re-used. Was the panel initially designed for the early Jacobean church, and in time sold off? Within a domestic environment this would have helped reinforce the meaning and significance of the symbolism of the rituals of the church. Or, was its style copied from the reredos specifically to act as a domestic equivalent? In either case, the adoption of a pattern traditionally employed in overtly religious settings clearly reflected the householder’s desire to remind those within his home of the meaning of Protestantism, their affiliation to it and their role in its promotion. It is notable, yet probably no more than a matter of coincidence, that it features neither iconographic imagery nor folk imagery - nor any form of damage.

The combination of classical forms witnessed on many Jacobean pulpits is exhibited in this property not only as a religious prompt but as a badge of this seventeenth-century individual’s acknowledgement of the evolving international influences on culture. A composite meaning lay at the heart of the carving, in a period of continuing religious upheaval, when the beliefs and expressions of parochial life continued to slowly diminish, and while classicism and the developing Renaissance wove their way into the fabric of the everyday.

333 High Street, Cottenham

This example, whilst outwardly expressive of an awareness of classical fashion is inwardly reflective of the spirituality of its owners, relations of Thomas Tenison, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and confirmed Protestants.

Despite the English Heritage description of this property as mid seventeenth century, it saw the introduction of a large red brick inglenook fireplace in a period before 1617.\(^{130}\)

Within a generation or two of its installation, its ornamentation was affected by the introduction of a second hand mantle shelf and façade. The original three-bay lobby entry plan, featuring two heated rooms by virtue of the new back to back fireplace, and a further unheated room beyond, is reflective of the form of many dwellings from the later sixteenth century, and notably of the house in Fen Ditton.\(^{131}\) At its inception both rooms were similarly plain, though in this instance it was the fireplace in the parlour that was selected for adornment. As we have seen, enclosure meant that families began to retire to ante-chambers for privacy and dining, while the servants ate and slept in the hall. However, in a village farmhouse, albeit one of notable status, the scope for such division was undeniably limited.\(^{132}\)

\(^{130}\) As evidenced by the dated note and wooden button discovered in the mortar beneath the bresummer, and described in the chapter on concealment.

\(^{131}\) Johnson, *Housing Culture*, p.89; See pp.124-129.

\(^{132}\) T. Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p.122.
Plate 13 showing the caryatid on the parlour bresummer.

The mantle shelf, with an applied façade and a pair of caryatids, is a rare embellishment extant in a vernacular property of this scale. Such details are awkward to date as they evolved from the Italian, in their idiosyncratic English manner, during the sixteenth century, but were applied throughout the Classical and Renaissance periods. Hamling noted that it was however relatively common in the period to depict female figures of virtues as supporting columns on either side of a painting or carving. The questions that Hamling’s assertion generates are: did this specific overmantle once feature such a narrative? Or, were the caryatids relocated from elsewhere and used in isolation, out of historical and artistic context, and employed to express an individual’s contemporary fashion sense in a simplistic manner? In their remoteness the caryatids could appear as a context-free application, incoherent in their specific meaning - but this is to miss the broader point. Their role was to express the greater, overarching message of social arrival through religious and fashionable association.

The proposal to introduce the carvings was probably the decision of Thomas Dowsing or his son, also Thomas, both gentlemen of the village. The wife of Thomas Dowsing the elder gave birth to their first daughter, Mercie, in 1606, who eventually married John Tenison. It was their son, Thomas (b.1636, d.1715), who became the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1694. The gentrification might thus reflect the owners’ desire to be seen as cultured and fashionable but undeniably Protestant, in a cost-effective and straightforward manner. Their financial status was sound, so it would appear that their approaching urbanity as much as their first-rate religious affiliations ensured the

133 Hall’s observation of a very similar group of three caryatids on a bresummer in Hampshire was that they followed the tradition of the screen found at Trinity College, Cambridge, dated to 1605. Hall, ‘Fixtures and fittings’, pp.104-105.
134 Hamling, Decorating the Godly Household, p.130.
fireplace façade – amongst other, moveable effects and tapestries, no doubt – was employed to express their new found status as family members of the most important religious figure in the country.

The pattern which emerges is of householders increasing in wealth and corresponding status through land acquisition, marriage and professional development, who subsequently utilised their money to describe their increase in fortune through the fabric of their homes. Nevertheless, whilst fashionable, the material expressions of individuals in this research were increasingly interwoven with messages of religiosity. This combination of elements both profane and sacred is a fundamental theme that links each example as it links each chapter.

**Priest’s House, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck**

The final case study was intended to be expressive neither of status nor fashion but inwardly reflective of a spirituality which, on a spectrum of articulacy, is considered the nearest of the current group to the following state of transition, in which the voice was used in a slightly hushed tone, imparting knowledge that only a discrete group of individuals were privy to.

This property is an early fifteenth-century hall house with a jettied cross wing from the following century. The manifestation of belief found here is located in the spandrel of a door leading from what was originally the open hall into the service end beyond.
Illustration 7 shows the cross wing hall house, with service end located to the south. The site of the carving is circled.

Plate 14. Priest’s House, Swaffham Bulbeck.

The carving is naïve and English Heritage describe it as ‘a bearded male head with a coronet, probably a king’. Historically, the only king who featured a beard during the later medieval or early, early modern period was Henry VIII, who reigned from 1509 to 1547. On the opposite side of the spandrel is a shield. As protector of the faith the king was in the most elevated of positions, in this carving looking paternalistically upon his subjects. However, the similarity with another paternalistic male in the form of Christ is intriguing. The King of Kings protected the individual and offered eternal life, while Henry created a new, less superstitious, arguably more legible path to His kingdom. Whether originally intended to represent both Henry and Christ or not, the analogy of paternalism is clear. It is suggested here that the owner sought protection from a higher being, though its naivety, which appears as the wooden version of a brief sketch, and its scale suggest its use more as a personal devotional prompt than as a statement for the visual appreciation of friends and associates. Were it so, one would fully expect its significance to have been enhanced through its increased scale, quality and,

136 English Heritage List Entry no. 1127050.
significantly, its relocation to the hall or parlour, consequently elevating it to a piece of political art and a symbol of affiliation.

Plates 15 and 16. The carving on the left is located in the centre of the hall fireplace bressummer and as such expresses to a broad audience the significance and status of the owners in a way that the carving of Henry VIII does not. It is a ‘device of the Baldwin Family’, from Swaffham Prior,\(^{137}\) Plate 16 shows the imported bressummer at 20 High Street, Burwell, situated immediately opposite the parish church and similar in its artistic intention to that at Swaffham Prior.

It would appear the most significant aspect of the carving is its location above a service door, illustrative of the closer association between the householder and his staff, and of a time prior to the enclosure of the property. The proximity of the carving to an individual passing beneath it resonates strongly with the theory of ‘spiritual frequency’ that I developed in response to various patterns of spatial expression, and which is explored further in the following chapter. In the current example however, the power exerted by the king’s image would have had the effect of protecting the residents, both owners and employees, from harm when they passed through the door. This owner sought to cloak himself and his family in the safety and sanctity of the king, reinforced each time one of them passed underneath it. This was a powerful amulet and represents a thin place, in which Heaven and Earth appear to draw closest and, as with the theory of spiritual frequency, this too is considered further on.

Equally significant in this example is the location of the dwelling, immediately opposite the parish church. Views of the church, which is no more than 30 metres to the north, and regular attendance to experience and absorb the doctrines of the new Protestant liturgy, may alone have been considered insufficiently robust cloaks of protection, given the chilly atmosphere engendered by the upheavals. In order to absorb the new

\(^{137}\) As noted in the English Heritage description, List Entry no. 1127050.
philosophies and to guarantee the continued protection of the king of England and his new Church this image would have amplified his paternalism.

As an aside, a final observation is noteworthy and equally salient to the chapter on taper burns, which follows. The property featuring the portrait also exhibits several burns located exclusively on its hall and parlour bresummers, probably as the result of a later generation’s desire for a form of protection that the long dead king would have found difficult to exercise. Everyday concerns had changed during the seventeenth century, despite continual rumblings of religious discontent, and so a contemporary form of ritual was required in order to address them. What is noteworthy is that, had the burns been created in this property several generations later by dispossessed Catholics, a theory considered in the following chapter, one might be forgiven for assuming the applicants would have sought to deface the old portrait - but they did not. It may indeed be the case that later generations of Catholics adopted the image as a biblical king. However, and notwithstanding the possible reasons for the lack of damage, debate is generated over the application and meaning of burns, and the religious affiliations of their applicants.

This final case is also a clear example of the difficulty of arranging broad, but theoretically nebulous evidence into neatly defined headings, and is also indicative of the palimpsest of belief so strongly evidenced in this research and an illustration of the complexity of individual piety expressed behind closed doors.

Conclusion

Our understanding of the meaning of woodcarvings has been advanced through the analysis of these examples, partly in light of their location within the household and reciprocally, our understanding of domestic life and domestic interiors has been enhanced through furthering understanding of the use of woodcarvings as vehicles to express individual meaning.

As a motif, woodcarving reflects several aspects of early modern life. The relocation of once-fashionable portraits illustrates changing fashion and evolving closure of space.
The defacement of both the portraits and the decorative work seen in Bottisham and Fen Ditton raises questions about the meaning of those carvings and the reasons for, and the result of, damaging the décor.

The vernacular portrait of Henry VIII and its lack of vandalism expressed something altogether different, and is explained by its location and its scale, an example of the religious support required within the confines of the home during more turbulent times.

In terms of the analogy of the voice, it is used here predominantly in its normal range to inform those within the domestic sphere of the perceived importance of the owners and of their confidence in their choices of artistic and spiritual expression. The hall and parlour bore the brunt of these visual explanations, in a time when the social stratification, until then quite rigid, was beginning to show signs of movement.
2 PROJECTION

Salt Niches

This second research chapter will show how the recess in fireplaces, colloquially termed a ‘salt niche’,\(^1\) was employed by some individuals, in some situations, for the storage, exhibition and veneration of significant spiritual objects, rather than simply for the storage of foodstuffs, as is widely assumed.

In the vocal metaphor communication is projected. The location of these devices, predominantly within halls and parlours, suggests a level of communication in which every individual within the room would have experienced and understood their meaning in a similar way to those who witnessed the woodcarvings in the previous chapter.

Considering the thousands of recesses in houses across England and the hundreds of architectural historians concerned with the evolution of vernacular dwellings, it is perhaps surprising that the historiography is quite so limited. Stephen Van Dijk and Joan Walker considered the ecclesiastical origins of church cupboards or aumbries, and in passing noted that cupboards both open-fronted and secured with doors were a common feature of domestic architecture. It came as no surprise to them to discover closed aumbries in churches, suggesting an evolutionary link between the two. ‘The purpose of these aumbries is obvious: the storage of valuables for the ministry, such as….candles…and the holy Eucharist’.\(^2\) However, it seems their purpose was not so obvious to everyone. Edward Joy considered they were originally employed in monasteries, for the storage of books, and whilst he made no suggestion of a connection with domestic application, the term was already beginning to be replaced in the mid sixteenth century when the word ‘cupboard’ was increasingly used, suggestive of a genealogical relationship between the secular and the sacred.\(^3\)

---

\(^1\) While many vernacular architectural historians refer to the ‘salt niche’, Brunskill termed the recess either a ‘spice cupboard’, if it featured a door, or a ‘keeping hole for the candles’ if it did not. R.W. Brunskill, *Traditional Buildings of Britain* (1981; London, 1997), pp.107, 113, 115.


James Ayres noted the formation of salt-boxes in North Yorkshire ‘hewn out of two great slabs of sandstone….The largest recorded example has external measurements of 31” x 21” x 23”. He further noted that openings were normally about 6” x 6”, which would be appropriate for access to a small salt cellar. However, despite his observations on the dimensions, he did not question their use.4

Correspondence with art historians and domestic and architectural historians has yielded very little. Linda Hall photographed recesses extensively for a book on fixtures and fittings but made little mention of their use beyond the observation that they were employed for storage.5 However, whilst recently compiling the list description for 13-17 Horse Street in Sodbury, Gloucestershire, she did note a recess which may have been a ‘ritualistic washing niche’ and she suggested the date of the doorframe adjacent - and therefore by implication, the niche itself - to be between c.1300 and 1400, on the basis of dendrochronologically dated timber in other, similar structures. This is one of very few mentions of ritual possibilities for niches and, if accurately dated, places it firmly in the medieval Catholic period. At a similar time, Nina Jennings recorded a recess in a house in Westward in Cumbria which featured a ‘candle niche’, but there is no commentary to support her description.6 Was it used historically for a candle, or simply at the time of the survey?

More recently, Catriona Mackie described how, in some later Hebridean longhouses, the chimney flue was designed to avoid a recess situated centrally above the fire, a place she considered was possibly employed for the storage of ritual items, such as a bible.7

However, the most comprehensive analysis of recesses comes from the Channel Isles. John McCormack’s forthcoming book gives a thorough account of their evolution and use, where he argues they were used for hand and face washing. He states that ‘In recent

5 L. Hall and N. Alcock, Fixtures and Fitting in Dated Houses, 1567–1763 (York, 1994). This book looks at 17 ‘spice cupboards’, all with decorated doors. It is effectively a typology. There is no assessment of their incidence, disposition, or use. No reference is made to openings without doors and, in correspondence with Hall she confirmed that most of those she had photographed were in surrounding walls, rather than within fireplaces. June, 2012.
7 In discussion during the ‘Buildings in society international’ conference (Belfast, June 19-21, 2014).
centuries, their real usage completely forgotten, they have wrongly been associated with Catholic rituals and have been said to have been taken out of churches at the Reformation….In origin the lavabo might indeed have been copied from church piscinae….And the formality of the Mass might also have been emulated by the ritual of mealtimes in sophisticated medieval households’. This statement references Girouard’s commentary on domestic manners, and is an intriguing observation to which we shall return, through the use of my examples.

Perhaps the general scarcity of research is a result of problems with the nature of the evidence. To date, and notwithstanding McCormack’s observations, it appears that on only three other occasions has there been any record of a recess being considered for anything other than storage or washing. And as with other aspects of my research the circumstantial evidence is significant, though ultimately primary documentary evidence is missing. Even the contemporary commentator William Harrison, who detailed domestic construction and furnishing in his Description of England, neglected to mention their existence.

The recess as a vehicle for religious expression was not however confined to the domestic interior. In 1859 in Gloucester there stood a carved wooden angel in a tall niche set into the external corner post of a timber framed dwelling, and smaller niches flanking it would have contained additional religious images. John Parker assured us that they were doubtless equally common in England as they were on the continent before the Reformation, ‘though they have been very generally destroyed, having been abused for superstitious uses’. He also noted that in Newark in the same year there stood a house with a ‘long series of niches with figures in plaster inserted in wooden panels’.

However, whilst these examples have since been destroyed, an angel continues to stand not in a niche, but in relief, on a corner post on a high quality early sixteenth-century

---

town house in Needham Market, in Suffolk. The figure is situated on the corners of High Street and Bridge Street, facing north towards the parish church.\textsuperscript{11}

Plates 17 and 18 show the angel on the corner post. Needham Market, Suffolk.

All three examples were possibly constructed in the years before Henry VIII had ascended the throne and, in the case of those in niches, were perhaps re-carved and re-installed following their presumed removal, during the later early modern period.

**The Research**

There are 45 recesses in 22 houses, of which 16 houses are within the study area and they include a variety of shapes, sizes and situations. Additional evidence has been supplied from other counties in England including the Channel Isles, as well as Scotland, to contextualise form and use.

My research looks at the description of the recess as a ‘salt niche’ and suggests that in some instances they performed dual functions of a practical and a spiritual nature. While their initial employment in churches, monasteries and grand houses evolved in the period before the Reformation, in some instances possibly to serve both needs, it is argued that during the sixteenth century, and as a personal badge of affiliation to Catholicism, the niche was introduced more widely into the home. My research further proposes that domestic brick fireplaces came as a timely architectural development, enabling a great many householders to construct a niche in the fashionable new

\textsuperscript{11} English Heritage List Entry no.1277416
material. It was employed to accommodate the symbolic accoutrements which helped preserve the Catholic tradition, to bolster individual faith and to express both in the relative privacy of the home at a time of religious and individual persecution. However, only when there is a body of circumstantial evidence to support its use is a recess here termed a niche.

Recesses in the fabric of a dwelling vary in proportion and depth, and are situated in different rooms overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, on ground floors. It is clear that the purpose of many was storage, but in their variety of location and size it is equally clear that storage was not limited to foodstuffs. In the study area all recesses were set into brick or stone walls, the result of construction usually, though not always, associated with the erection of a chimney stack. Rapoport stated that ‘much of the meaning [of the interior space of the home] has to do with personalisation and hence perceived control, with decoration [and] with moveable elements rather than with architectural elements’.\textsuperscript{12} In these instances it is considered the householder oversaw the construction of recesses which were, by virtue of their role, at times both personal decoration and architectural elements.

The vast majority of the sample are open fronted and situated at the back of a ground floor fireplace. However, several have been found in other locations and they have been duly incorporated into the study.\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{13} This incidence of open fronted recesses is not necessarily typical of the entire country. In Gloucestershire there are a substantial volume of cupboards in sixteenth and seventeenth century houses, situated on the facing wall of the fireplace, but very few recesses set within the confines of the fire. In discussion with Hall, May 11, 2013.
The Sample Group

Detailed dimensions and photographs of fireplace niches included in Appendix 1.

NB. ‘lhs’ – Left hand side    ‘rhs’ – Right hand side

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>No. of niches in fireplace</th>
<th>Location and Observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78 High Street, Bottisham</td>
<td>1 in 1</td>
<td>In lhs at back, small with channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newnham Farmhouse, Burwell</td>
<td>1 in 1</td>
<td>Lhs in back. Shallow, rectangular and landscape format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan House, Burwell</td>
<td>2 in 1</td>
<td>Symmetrically located cupboards with doors on face in Georgianised fireplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>333 High Street, Cottenham</td>
<td>3 in 1 and 1 in 1</td>
<td>2 asymmetrically located. Seat in jamb altered to cupboard. 1 in jamb of opposing fireplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 High Street, Cottenham</td>
<td>2 in 1 and 1 cupboard</td>
<td>Symmetrically shaped and located, with decorated heads in back, with cupboard with door on flank on lhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135 High Street, Cottenham</td>
<td>2 in 1</td>
<td>Tall symmetrically located with oval heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Farmhouse, High Ditch Lane, Fen Ditton</td>
<td>1 in 1</td>
<td>Shallow and tall on lhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 High Ditch Lane, Fen Ditton</td>
<td>4 in 1</td>
<td>1 bread oven on flank, 1 on opposing flank with later Georgian door. 2 in back, 1 small and deep, other square and shallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Three Tuns, High Street, Fen Drayton</td>
<td>3 in 1</td>
<td>2 symmetrically located in back with stepped heads and 1 with large round head on lhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christi Cottage, 20 Station Road, Over</td>
<td>1 in 1</td>
<td>Cut into brickwork in bresummer above fireplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Roses, Reach</td>
<td>1 in 1, 1 cupboard in 1 and 1 cupboard on stairs</td>
<td>Recess on rhs in back with channel. Cupboard on rhs in flank wall of opposing fireplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest’s House, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck</td>
<td>2 in 1</td>
<td>1 on lhs with round head, 1 on rhs square and shallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lordship Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck</td>
<td>1 in 1</td>
<td>Small in internal angle with decorated head. 1 in flank and 1 back on lhs. Cupboard on face wall close to fireplace on rhs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck</td>
<td>2 in 1 and 1 cupboard adjacent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42 High Street, Swaffham Prior</td>
<td>2 in 2, 1 in 1 and 3 in cellar</td>
<td>Arranged either side of fire, in back and flank, asymmetrically located and sized. 3 in separate walls in cellar of similar sizes Cupboard on lhs in flank wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodwin Manor Farmhouse, 1 Station Road, Swaffham Prior</td>
<td>1 in 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 High Street, Willingham</td>
<td>3 in 1</td>
<td>2 in back, asymmetrically located, 1 in chamfered flank on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
rhs. Possibly converted into bread oven at later date

The Swan, High Street, Elstow 4 in 1 1 in each flank asymmetrically located, and 2 on face of breast

The Emplins, 2 Church End, Gamlingay 1 in 1 Rectangular on lhs in back

The Manor House, High Street, Hemingford Grey 1 in 1 Small square cupboard with door on RHS in back

Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling 8 in 1 4 in back, asymmetrically located and shaped, 2 approx. 8’ up the flue, 2 in face of breast

Conduit House, The Green West, Long Melford 2 above 1 Almost symmetrically shaped and located above the fireplace, with decorative and moulded heads.

Wootton Green Farmhouse, Cranfield Road, Wootton 5 in 1 1 cupboard with door in back on rhs, 1 large recess in flank on rhs and a stack of 3 cupboards with doors on wall outside fireplace on rhs

Table 2 illustrates the range of size, frequency and location of openings around the fireplace.

This review makes no claim as to the frequency and meaning of recesses beyond the study area, but general spatial arrangements may be suggestive of principles.

Fireside Activity

At the head of this discussion is consideration of the role of the fireplace which occupies centre stage, as it did within the early modern home. The range of activity carried out around it was relatively broad and an attempt has been made here to explore and amplify its use and significance as a spiritual space, by illustrating the conflation of various aspects of life which are argued to be interrelated. They include the coincidental chronology of masonry fireplace construction and the Reformation, the resulting removal and sale of Catholic religious accoutrements and the subsequent ownership of a range of significant copper alloy or ‘latten’ objects, possession of which appears to

---


15 There is debate however over the constituent parts of latten. Alexander O. Curle described latten as one of a variety of names given to brass which had been formed by copper and calamine, and used largely for sepulchral brasses. A.O. Curle, ‘Domestic candlesticks from the fourteenth to the end of the eighteenth century’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 5 ser.*, 12 (1926), pp.183-214.
have diminished coterminous with the abatement of Reformation turmoil in the seventeenth century.

Secular life played out in the same theatre as the spiritual. Great sacredness was attached to the private hearth for centuries, and the concept of it as the centre of the house lends itself to metaphor, as described previously by Ayres. Hastings, as well as Ayres noted that the use of the term to describe domesticity is evidenced in the Latin phrase ‘pro aris et focis’ – for the altars and hearths. While considering the metaphor, it is also relevant to quote from Thomas who stated that ‘a plethora of sub-superstitions…accumulated around the sacrament of the altar’. And if this was the case within the confines of the church, it is not untoward to propose a similar development of sub-superstitions around the domestic fireplace.

The hearth was certainly a numinous space where the family came together to replenish, to commune and to engage in business. Matthew Johnson made the case that the rural house was usually the centre of a working farm and the kitchen, butteries and brew-houses the centres of production. The semi-private space of the hall, in which a notable number of recesses are found, would have been experienced by a range of people. Evidence suggests that by the late fifteenth century the open hall had in many instances taken on a ceremonial function, though it appears from various inventories that not all were used throughout the year. Indeed, some remained unheated until the mid seventeenth century, and were simply employed to express the status of the owners. However, by the 1680s that significance had largely diminished.

In the following pages, and given the casual description of the recess, an assessment of the significance of salt is made. Domestic inventories are analysed in regard to its significance, and its evolving and diminishing status within the hall. The research then reflects upon alternative uses for the recess in light of their variety, while the fourth part

---

18 Johnson, English Houses, 1300-1800, p.54.  
of the chapter describes the destruction of the Catholic Church and the sales of its appurtenances. In the final part the disparate pieces of evidence are brought together.

Storage and Use

Of those dwellings that featured no third room to act as a kitchen it was usually, though not exclusively, the hall that contained the equipment for cooking. The employment of a recess in the fireplace within a hall suggests that in some instances the space was utilised for the overt and the everyday, such as the storage of cooking implements and, indeed, the storage of salt. Certainly its warmth meant that in the fens eels were commonly cured in chambers located to the side of the fireplace. Wigs were also stored in appropriately-named ‘wig cupboards’, sometimes located in the cross-passage, as witnessed in the seventeenth-century farmhouse, below.


The observation made by Michael Wilson that ‘what we today call a cupboard was, quite simply, an aumbry – a term still used to this day [1977] for church cupboards in which sacred vessels are kept’ is tantalizing, and offers another early glimpse of a link between the secular and the spiritual within the domestic arena. A single example has been found in the documentary record of such a cupboard. In Wymondham in Norfolk, Phillip Cullyer’s inventory from January 1625 featured ‘certain implements in a little ambrie’ located within the little parlour. This is significant as it supports not only the views of Van Dijk, Walker and Wilson, but it places the use of the term and, significantly, the domestic application of these cupboards, in the early seventeenth century, which helps substantiate the fundamental

---

20 In discussion with Elizabeth Davis, March 16, 2011.
theory of this chapter that employment of the recess was at least in part adopted for the purposes of spiritual expression.

Salt - Symbolism and Ceremony

In medieval England salt was considered ‘the salvation of body and soul’, and ‘wherever you are sprinkled let every delusion and wickedness and every craftiness of devilish cunning, scatter and depart when called upon’. In the fens, ‘sin-eating’ involved consuming a piece of bread laden with salt, which had formerly been placed upon the chest of someone recently deceased. After receiving everlasting absolution for his own sins, an individual bore the sins of the departed, for monetary reward, by consuming the salt.

In regard to its domestic ceremonial use there is evidence in written records from at least the thirteenth century, and by the sixteenth century an understanding of the proper ordering of society had become a fundamental characteristic of culture. The time of the salt’s arrival at the table and its location and display reinforced its sacredness, though the concept probably also developed as salt became symbolic of wealth, authority and power. This connotation with status is notable and it has long been understood that the high end of many dwellings was distinguished by a greater degree of ornament. The messages contained within the regulations of ceremony devolved both in their prescription and their reference to the nobility, so that by our period both gentlemen and yeomen were conversant with the domestic arrangements for salt.

In considering the liturgical ceremonies from which these meanings may have derived, Duffy explained that on Sundays salt and water were blessed and then mixed. The altar and the congregation was sprinkled with this holy water which was subsequently taken to the homes of parishioners where it was sprinkled on the hearth to fend off evil. He stated that ‘Such practices provided the laity with sources of unstoppable power which they used against fear of every kind’. However, whilst the sentiment is clear, such a broad assertion remains to be questioned.

The Domestic Inventory

Wills, and by extension inventories, were considered the domain of wealthier members of the community concerned with the disposal of their property, though their use had generally increased after the sixteenth century. However, from the transcribed inventories from St. Stephen’s parish in St. Albans in Hertfordshire goods ranged from as little as £3.14s to in excess of £290. Inventories from individuals from most financial backgrounds regularly included salt cellars, usually located within the hall (or kitchen, when available). These were occasionally described as being pewter or silver and in various wills their importance was illustrated by the fact that, at the final reckoning, the cellar was not only considered worthy of consideration in the first place, but that the owner invariably chose to gift such items to immediate family members.

In the inventory of the goods of St. Mary’s guild in Boston in Lincolnshire, dated 1534, ‘xj saltes of lay metall, brokyn and whole’ were listed. However, on the same page were listed a ‘salte of latten’, illustrating a clear distinction from lay metal and possibly, by

---

30 M. Parker, All My Worldly Goods, II (St. Albans, 2004), pp.132, 178. Whilst this work provides evidence of the number and frequency of items listed, for many individual examples of items, wills from Cambridgeshire were analysed.
31 Ibid., p.122. The inventory of John Cowley, April 29, 1595. ‘fower saltes’ are noted in the lower parlour. The inventory of Robert Antrobus from April 12, 1597, mentions that the hall contained ‘fyve salutes’. p.124. In his will, January 5, 1598/99, William Lane gave away a salt cellar each to his second and third eldest daughters (of six) and to his wife. Alexander Zinzano’s will, September 21, 1557 offered a ‘sylver salte of xiii unncys gyldyd [to his daughter] at the day of her maryage’. p.47.
virtue of its material and its cost, if not its provenance, a spiritual one. The specific location for the storage of cellars within a room is, inevitably, missing. Nevertheless, given the range of furniture in halls during the period, and the symbolic significance of cellars, it is suggested that they were either stored in an open-fronted cupboard, left permanently on the table, or housed within a recess. However, there were alternative methods for its storage. Francis Steer observed that ‘Salt boxes, usually kept near the fireplace or else in a specially constructed tunnel at the side of the chimney, [which might actually describe a recess] are not listed so often as one would expect in view of the importance of salt’. They tended to be relatively small, due in part to the cost of the material, the cost of the salt, and the necessarily restricted proportions of a hand-held vessel. Nevertheless, despite their obvious functionality, their significance as an expression of holiness and the owner’s wealth was sometimes clearly expressed, and on occasion their individual form adopted as a convenient banner on which to communicate religious thought - and in so doing amplify the sacred nature of the vessel and the faith of its owner.

---


33 Parker, All My Worldly Goods, II, pp.29-249. Of 77 inventories, dating from 1545 to 1644, in which the layout of the house was described room by room, and included the hall – or, was sufficiently clearly explained to ascertain what the hall alone contained, there were:- 102 tables, benches, trestles or boards; 81 cupboards; 58 formes; 189 stools; 76 chairs; nine beds; nine chests; four shelves. (I have excluded soft furnishings for the sake of clarity.) On average therefore, a hall might contain 1.3 tables, one cupboard, 2.45 stools and one chair. Only one in nine halls contained a bed and a chest, two in every three halls had a forme, while only one in 19 contained shelves.

34 F.W. Steer (ed.), Farm and Cottage Inventories of Mid-Essex, 1635-1749 (Colchester, 1950), p.19. This variation of storage facility and the consequent status of the salt may reflect the differing sorts of individuals and the generally later date of the inventories and thus, the reduced significance of the commodity.

35 http://www.vam.ac.uk. The salt cellar illustrated from 1340 is inscribed within the border on the upper part of the body: ‘Ave Maria Gracia Plena Dominus Tecum Benedit’. 
A Glimmer of Hope

In reconstructing the domestic interior it is pertinent to consider the quality of light in the average sixteenth- or seventeenth-century gentleman’s hall which was, despite the obvious illumination of the fire, initially quite dull, partly because the number or size of windows was extremely limited for reasons of cost and security.36

The openings themselves were small, though sometimes conjoined to form horizontal slots in the fabric of the wall. They consisted of heavy hardwood frames, traditionally filled with a latticework of wicker or oak strips,37 though by the seventeenth century sometimes opaque diamond-light quarries framed in lead and supported by iron bars were becoming more common.38

The limited transparency of the glass severely reduced the quantity of light reaching the far corners of the room, and the dark surface of a timber or tiled floor and the severe hardwood furniture overwhelmed the relative paleness of the lime wash on the walls.39 The

---

36 L. Hall, Period House Fixtures and Fittings, 1300-1900 (Newbury, 2005), pp.66-68.
38 Hall, Period House Fixtures and Fittings, pp.67, 69.
39 At Bottisham Place, the timber panelling from 1564 has only ever been painted five times, according to the paint analyst Catherine Hassall’s assessment. The period between each layer averaged
occasional painted cloth and a cushion on a chair may have been sufficient.\textsuperscript{40} Many halls contained but a single candlestick (though of course they were eminently moveable).\textsuperscript{41} Their light was weak. Therefore, and notwithstanding the light generated by the fireplace, the darkness of the room, exacerbated by the sooty void surrounding the fire and its dusty pervasiveness, would have meant that a small silver cellar, perhaps inscribed with religious prose and containing the salt, located in the middle of a table - or in a dedicated recess - would have appeared rather significant. Its glimmering surfaces would have acted as an alternative focus, both physically and metaphorically more reflective, and upon which the spiritually attuned might have directed their thoughts. However, not all rooms were as murky as this picture suggests. In questioning the old men of his village in 1577, Harrison noted that in their earlier days there were plenty of wooden objects in the domestic environment, but latterly pewter, silver and tin had become more common.\textsuperscript{42}

In terms of the transient surface dressing to be found in wall paintings and broadsheets, Hamling stated that a fashion in both England and Scotland for religious scenes in the home reached a peak between 1620 and 1640,\textsuperscript{43} illustrating that in homes of the middling sorts the darkness may have begun to recede, though perhaps more slowly in the houses of the poorer sorts, where painted cloths sufficed for decoration.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{40} However, not all domestic property was so sparsely decorated. In the appropriately named Peter Bright’s will, proved on February 9, 1545 were listed a green hanging, a folded table with a carpet on it, and various cushions in the hall, whilst in the parlour there were hangings of red saye and more cushions. In the ‘chamber over the gate’ there were further hangings. G.J. Gray and W.M. Palmer (eds), \textit{Abstracts from the Wills and Testamentary Documents of Printers, Binders and Stationers of Cambridge, from 1504-1699} (London, 1915), pp. 5-8.

\textsuperscript{41} No author, \textit{Lock, Stock and Barrel: Some Hertfordshire Inventories, 1610-1650} (Hertford, 1978), pp.22-23. Edmund Nodes’ inventory from 1631 listed four candlesticks in the chamber over the hall, along with four salt cellar – but none in the hall itself, which suggests that at least some were moved to his chamber on the evening before he passed away, probably from the hall below. Interestingly, two latten candlesticks were listed in his kitchen. In Bright’s will 12 candlesticks were listed in the ‘chamber over the gate’, but none in the parlour or hall. Gray and Palmer (eds), \textit{Abstracts from the Wills}, p.6.


Salt – The Reduction of Status

Whilst cellars were significant for a variety of reasons, salt gradually became more readily available and in our period it was imported in quantity from France and Spain. The cost remained relatively high due to its importation, (despite its manufacture in the north-west and the south coast of England), which was based partly on the mistaken belief that the heat of the British sun was insufficient to reduce sea water into bay salt. And as the status of salt waned, so cellars became smaller, more functional and more common.

Book Storage

Another observation relating to the assumption that salt was stored in these recesses concerns the occasional employment of wooden doors, which in their closing would have obscured the cellar from view. This is counter-intuitive in an age when expression of status and wealth was important and the ceremonial significance of the condiment widespread. Doors and frames remain in only a couple of openings, though in the sample very few ever accommodated one. Some recesses would certainly have been employed for the storage of books including bibles. Nevertheless, in a similar way to his assertion on salt boxes, Steer assured us that ‘owners of bibles no doubt kept them in oak boxes known as bible boxes, often carved and with sloping lids, but they are not mentioned in inventories’. The obvious response is to question his assumption in light of their apparent invisibility in inventories. It remains equally plausible, perhaps more so given the notable volume of extant recesses, that significant items such as

---

46 Hall clarified that she called these recesses spice cupboards. Email correspondence, June 27, 2012.
47 It is interesting to note the employment of doors was of little concern to owners in regards to fire safety as those witnessed remain the original, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The proximity of the door, for example in Manor House, Hemingford Grey is particularly close to the later, probably seventeenth century, site of the fire basket.
48 Hall observed that a family in Devon employed one of their two wall cupboards in the entrance hall for the storage of the ‘family bible’. Email correspondence, June 27, 2012.
49 Steer (ed.), *Farm and Cottage Inventories of Mid-Essex*, p.19.
bibles might actually have been stored there instead, though with the burgeoning
industry in devotional books which included almanacs, guides to hymnody and
catechisms, some would no doubt have been stored elsewhere. This rash of newly
printed work is indicative of the developing ability to read, which included not only
those of the middling and better sorts, but also individuals from the poorer sorts. There
is evidence that people who owned very little did also own bibles, including a
Cambridgeshire bricklayer called Richard Mansfield, whose inventory noted a bible in
his kitchen alongside his working tools.

Alison Taylor identified a practice in which bookishness, devotion and privacy were
innately connected, though she cautioned that this did not necessarily mean readers read
in isolation. Contemplative reading of a sacred text, perhaps even out loud, would
have been an entirely appropriate activity before the fireplace, whether the reader was
alone or had their family gathered around.

The doors on two examples remain fixed on iron butterfly hinges, a form of hinge found
predominantly in the seventeenth century. The prominence and openness of the vast
majority of recess was as obvious as it was exposed, being designed for convenience
and display. However, in reflecting the paradigm which runs through this research that
behind the Practicality of the everyday lay the spiritual or, as Glassie put it, that
‘material expression is but a mask of mind’, access was necessary not only for reasons
pertaining to use, or for aesthetic appreciation, but also for the spiritual nourishment of
the householder.

---

50 M. H. Patterson, Domesticating the Reformation – Protestant Best Sellers, Private Devotion and the
Revolution of English Piety (Madison, 2007), p.53. Robert Starr of Sawston, will proved in April 1662,
kept a bible in his chamber over the hall. Cambridgeshire CRO, Ely Bonds and Inventories. Spool no.
2301111; 437.
51 Richard Mansfield’s goods were valued at £9.10s. Cambridgeshire CRO, Ely Bonds and Inventories,
1669-1673. Spool no. 2301112.
52 A. Taylor, ‘Into his secret chamber; Reading and privacy in late medieval England’, in J. Raven, H. Small
and N. Tadmor (eds), The Practice of Reading in England (Cambridge, 1996), pp.41-61.
54 Of the 22 properties with at least one recess, the average number (excluding those at Thatched house
in Kirtling which, extraordinarily, number eight) is 1.9 per dwelling. In summary, 16 dwellings feature
three or less, two contain four recesses, one has five and one has seven; H. Glassie, ‘Eighteenth-century
The Illuminated Display of Goods

The general attitude to the appreciation and exhibition of attractive, possibly ritual objects was shared. Lena Orlin stated that ‘Each beneficiary of this redistribution of once inalienable resources discovered his sense of individual identity enlarged in his possessions’.\(^5^5\) In the case of Thomas Thomas, whose will was proved in 1588, he owned not only latten candlesticks but a ‘deaths head in gold’ and a ‘standing cup’ of double gilt, which weighed 25oz., and was valued at £7.10s. Both items were stored in his chamber.\(^5^6\) In amplifying this spirit of piety the appropriately named Peter Bright, who died in 1545, had displayed five scochyns of latten in his hall, whilst in one of his chambers he exhibited to a smaller audience ‘two tables of images’, attesting to and fortifying his personal spiritual identity.\(^5^7\) The significance of this evidence is that these properties employed remarkably overt items to convey personal devotion, albeit cautiously within private spaces. So, whilst on an architectural spectrum their properties lay nearer that of the yeoman’s dwelling, on the spectrum of spiritual expression they lay substantially closer to Girouard’s medieval country houses which employed oratories, indicative of Catholic ritual activity. And whilst documentary evidence of the precise locations of any individual objects is lacking, it is nevertheless feasible that they belonged in niches. Certainly, a pair of opposing niches in Lord Lumley’s castle contained relief carvings of Aristotle and Plato, surely not unique in their siting and, as fashionable pieces with an arguably religious overtone, possibly emulated by the middling sorts.\(^5^8\)

In witnessing the increasingly cluttered hall, Richardson observed that the domestic life of the middling sort was one of richness, where individuals expressed their status through a range of furniture.\(^5^9\) George Edelen noted that farmers garnished their ‘cupboards with plate….and their tables with carpets and fine napery’.\(^6^0\)

---


\(^{56}\) Gray and Palmer (eds), *Abstracts from the Wills*, pp.66, 67.

\(^{57}\) A ‘scochyn’ (escutcheon) was a small shield-shaped emblem bearing a coat of arms. Gray and Palmer (eds), *Abstracts from the Wills*, p.7.


So we begin to see a domestic room decorated not only with the occasional hanging, a table, a cupboard and a salt cellar, but some bristling with textiles and vibrant with pewter, silver and latten. Some of this hardware was probably ex-Catholic Church paraphernalia, which would have generated an almost tangible spirituality within a room alive with liturgical practices. Johnson noted that the relatively simple interiors of late medieval houses became rare. The hall had begun to oscillate not only with metaphysical significance, but with brightly coloured objects. From the initial gloom, historians such as Hamling and Richardson have envisioned the hall illuminated, the highest status room in a dwelling animated with activity, colour and spirit.

Having considered domestic goods and their display, it follows that the alternative shapes of recess could have been tailored for the exhibition of a particular range of individual and specific objects.

Alternative Shapes

A brief typology of the various forms of recess follows, duly expanded upon as the ritual significance of individual niches gradually appears from the collective functionality of the recess.

Tall

There are four examples of tall, narrow recesses in three separate properties. The examples from Fen Ditton and Cottenham have been obscured by the later, probably Georgian insertions of a cupboard and door in the case of Fen Ditton, and a set of shelves in the Cottenham example, in themselves significant of the changes in use and the apparent dismissal of former meaning. The other two recesses are from the house at Kirtling, discussed previously.

62 Johnson, English Houses, 1300-1800, p.100.
None of these recesses are more than a brick in depth but the tallest, set against the back wall in Kirtling, is in excess of 1.2m high, with a lancet head. The second Kirtling example has been altered at a later date, again significant of a change in meaning. The accoutrements of the kitchen would have been at home on the floor around the fire, suggesting that the recesses were designed to accommodate something more significant than simply ironmongery.

Square and Shallow

A number of recesses are square, and equally conscious and prescribed in their form. There are several examples which imply they could only have been utilized for slim objects such as spoons or larger, essentially two dimensional objects, such as plates.
Diminutive

The dimensions of recess range from in excess of 1.2m in height and 0.4m in width, to something smaller than the dimensions of a male hand.

Plates 26a and 26b show a range of recesses at 2 High Street, Willingham.

Plates 27a and 27b illustrate a tiny, retrofitted niche. Christi Cottage, 20 Station Road, Over.

Inventories from the period mention several items diminutive enough to be have been placed in such a small recess, and they include silver spoons and cups, salt cellars, beads, money purses, ready money including ‘angilles’, gold rings and occasionally items such as a cup with a silver cover, valued at 17s.1d.63 However, inventory evidence for small objects seldom notes their specific location, which leaves scope for alternative theories. We see in the following chapter that miniaturisation of iconographic objects or images was undertaken in order to heighten their significance, and it is the possibility of the storage of some form of small amulet, perhaps even in combination with foodstuffs,

63 Parker, All My Worldly Goods, II, pp.6, 15, 30, 40, 124, 163, 226, 242. The ‘angille’ was a colloquial term for a gold coin. ‘Few….men cared for gold because it was not so ready payment and they were enforced to give a penny for the exchange of an angel’. Edelen, The Description of England, p.202. Margaret Pilgrim’s will, proved February 25, 1547, included a ‘cup with silver cover’, valued at 17sh.1d. Gray and Palmer (eds), Abstracts from the Wills, p.31.
that indicates a further opportunity for the profane and sacred to have shared the same space.

Decorated

Of the recesses studied, seven feature a corbelled head, three of which consist of a single corbel, located together in a cellar on three outside walls. There are three examples featuring moulded bricks, two of which are situated symmetrically about a single fireplace. While substantially simpler in design, nevertheless their essence is reminiscent of those niches described further on which appear to have been carved by masons versed in more elaborate church work.

Plates 28 and 29 show the decorated heads of a symmetrical pair of recesses in the parlour at 120 High Street, Cottenham and a single recess at Lordship Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck.

The pair in Cottenham are small, consciously finished and appear to reflect the decorative qualities of church windows. And, if this was the intention, it follows that their use was probably symbolic. The symmetry and symbolism of their arrangement might fairly be compared to the symmetricality about the altar, and the employment of candlesticks to illuminate the space which, given their associated reverence, reinforces an overtly religious message. Their proportions appear consistent with the space
required to accommodate early modern candlesticks, which were generally less than 30cm tall, and featured a broad base for stability. 64

Illustration 8 shows the three cell planform with unheated service wing and the location of the niches. 120 High Street, Cottenham.

The third recess with a decorated head can be seen at Swaffham Bulbeck 2, originally a private chapel for the Bolebec family which was converted in the sixteenth century to a dwelling and its fireplaces inserted. 65 Intriguingly, this recess is constructed into the jamb of the fireplace, at the internal corner of the masonry.

Illustration 9 shows the conversion of the Bolebec family chapel and the site of the niche. Lordship Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck.

However, the most intriguing decorated recesses featured in this research are to be found in Suffolk. At Long Melford a late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century timber framed dwelling accommodates two brick recesses above the hall fireplace, with finely carved one-piece, moulded heads.

65 English Heritage List Entry no.1127051.
Illustration 10 shows the site of the moulded niches above the hall fireplace in Conduit House, The Green West, Long Melford.

Not to scale

The property may have been in the ownership of devout Catholics during the sixteenth century when the village, and much of the county, continued to express strong Catholic sympathies and when Melford Hall, located opposite, was owned by the abbots of Bury St Edmunds. In magnifying the ritual significance of these niches, the chamber above the hall features a fine vaulted timber ceiling, extremely rare in domestic construction but reminiscent of those to be found in churches and chapels across East Anglia.

Plates 30a and 30b illustrate the niches at Conduit House, The Green West, Long Melford.

66 They are believed to date to the 1530s by the architectural historian Leigh Alston. Correspondence between him and the owners, March, 2006.
Plate 30c shows the fine ceiling to the chamber over the hall. Conduit House, The Green West, Long Melford.

This emphasis on a religious architectural heritage reinforces my theory that in some instances during the period these features were employed for religious contemplation in reflection of church architecture and church ritual. The aspiration to introduce the symmetry, formality and convention of church into the home in conjunction with its rituals is fully realised in this example, a clear illustration of my hypothesis that not only was the niche employed for spiritual purposes, but the entire property was employed as a vehicle for the expression of faith.67

On the Face of it

Recesses set on the façade of a fireplace occur in three dwellings, one of which lies within the study area.


67 Whilst many churches are asymmetrical, those in Bottisham, Stow Cum Quy and Swaffham Bulbeck are symmetrical. S.D.T. Spittle (ed), An Inventory by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in the County of Cambridge 2 North-East Cambridgeshire (London, 1972), pp. 3, 92, 98.
Despite a symmetrical arrangement on the façade in Kirtling and an asymmetrical layout in Elstow in Bedford, it is noteworthy that their general proportions to each other are very similar. The evidence suggests they were integral to the construction of the chimney. Their dimensions describe a conscious decision taken to ensure their appearance was uniform, in all probability to accommodate items of a similar form and function. Given that they are all of approximately half a brick in depth, their horizontal surface is on the cusp of being too shallow for the containment of various domestic objects. These locations placed upon a pedestal whichever items the owner chose to locate there, a significant place in the most significant space in the house. Surely, had they been required simply for the storage of foodstuffs, they would have been constructed at a more accessible height to match the others, illustrated in the same photographs. Thus it would appear that the decision to locate them at an inconvenient height enabled an alternative purpose, one which served to amplify an effect emanating from the items that were placed there.\textsuperscript{68}

Spiritual Repositories

In returning to the cautious siting of the recess in Lordship Cottage in Swaffham Bulbeck, five examples which might also be ascribed the term ‘cautious’ are located in three dwellings, two of which are within the study area.

\textsuperscript{68} In properties in Swaffham Bulbeck and Balsham carved symbols located over doors – and therefore of a similar height to these recesses – suggest a protective function and may reflect spiritual intentions in these examples.
In the hall of all three properties, set within the back wall of the brick fireplace, is a recess with a channel running behind the face of the brick, leading off one side of the jamb in two cases, and off both sides of the jamb in the case of Thatched Cottage in Kirtling. All pairs of jambs are sparingly treated. The first two examples were once plastered, though the channel was not finished in the same way, and none appear to have employed a door or a frame.

They are all in relatively high-status properties and are from the mid to late sixteenth century, an issue to which we shall return. However, the current issue concerns the intention to secrete items within their channels. Each recess is located in the chimney stack within the hall, so any suggestion that the void served to conceal items of financial significance, truly intended to be hidden from view, is patently not the case. All three houses feature two storeys from the date of their initial construction, at which time the residents would traditionally have retired to the chambers above to sleep. Common sense would have dictated that personal belongings and money would have accompanied them to their chamber to be locked in a chest, rather than being secreted in what is frankly not a very cunning hiding place. Hall suggested that of the cupboards she analyzed in Gloucestershire those situated on the first floor were probably for the storage of valuables.\(^{69}\)

The theory proposed in this thesis relates to the containment of small offerings, perhaps of lightweight monetary value, but of heavyweight spiritual significance. In much the

\(^{69}\) In correspondence with Hall, June 2012.
same way that Ralph Josselin in Essex buried a coin in the ground,\textsuperscript{70} and William Dowsing in Cottenham placed a coin in a crack in a timber beam within his house (both of which are considered further in the chapter on concealment), so the residents of these properties would have placed something such as a coin or the celestial candle stump into the recess, for the purpose of securing good fortune. The fact that these recesses are clearly in view suggests the act of concealment was accepted by those who would have been aware of its existence. Indeed, stowing an item, considered here to be a form of folk ritual, may have been undertaken in the presence of others, whose understanding and experience heightened the significance of the practise.

Plates 36 and 37 show the channel to the side of the recess in the hall in Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling, and in the kitchen in Donington le Heath Manor in Coalville, Leicestershire, c.1280.

The third secret repository, in Kirtling, features a channel behind both jambs of the façade measured at no more than 75mm by 110mm in its opening dimensions. Slightly further afield, in Leicestershire, the late thirteenth-century Donington le Heath Manor features a recess of similar scale and design to the three noted previously. While it might be that this particular structure establishes the form of spiritual niche in at least the medieval period when the Manor was erected, the property was heavily modified in 1618, when the store rooms were converted into a kitchen and parlour— and it may therefore represent an alteration from the early modern period approximately commensurate with the construction of the three former examples.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{71} http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/leisure_tourism/museums/donington/doningtonmuseum_about.htm
Perhaps more compelling still as evidence of symbolic storage, is again to be found in Thatched House in Kirtling. These two final examples comprise a pair of approximately cuboidal recesses with lancet tops and side channels, situated at a height in excess of 2.3m above floor level, within the darkness of the chimney flue. These recesses are not easily accessed without the use of a stool. Their location points to a role both secretive and ritualistic.

Plate 38. A view up the chimney flue in the hall at Thatched House in Kirtling, highlighting a small channel behind the face of brickwork in the recess.

Facing one another at this height it is tentatively suggested their function was to contain a pair of objects brought into service as ‘spirit catchers’, designed to prevent witches or their familiars from accessing the house via the flue, in a way that Merrifield considered a boot was used by John Schorn, a priest who captured the devil, in the fourteenth century.72 The form of these recesses clearly indicates fabrication at the point of construction, rather than later insertion.73

---

72 R. Merrifield, *The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic* (London, 1987), pp.134-135; See the chapter on ‘Introspection – Concealment’ in which the mediaeval priest John Schorn is discussed in regard to his containment of the devil in a boot.

73 English Heritage describe this property as sixteenth century and, by virtue of the fact that there is no mention of an inserted stack they consider the chimney and the frame to be of the same phase. List Entry no. 1126293.
Illustration 12. Section showing the location of the niches within the chimney flue at Thatched House in Kirtling.

Not to scale

Their apotropaic nature remains the most robust of the various possible uses, even in light of the argument that they served for the concealment of valuables, perhaps themselves of ritual significance. If concealment of expensive items had indeed been the original intention, their symmetricality and the secret channels facing the viewer, rather than against the opposing jambs, would appear a little odd if the parallel meaning of ritual is excluded. Furthermore, why did they not contain an iron door for security and fire prevention? The circumstantial evidence is tantalizing: their concealed location, symmetrical design and arrangement as a pair of wells in which to concentrate prayer all suggest employment as spirit catchers in an age imbued with witches, their familiars - and the unfamiliar.

It is now timely to consider the architectural development of the chimney at the vernacular level and the theoretical ramifications on the ability of the chimney to amplify belief.

Masonry Chimneys

From the later sixteenth century, when brick finally became economical enough for the wealthier residents of a village to employ, many smoky and hazardous timber framed smoke bays were replaced. There is however disagreement over the reason for its introduction, and the rate of domestic architectural evolution. Ian Mortimer considered
its use spread simply through its reduced costs and its mass manufacture.\textsuperscript{74} However, Johnson considered that the falling price of brick was as much a consequence as a cause of rising demand, and he thought it doubtful whether its price would have reflected the traditional pattern of supply and demand. As such, his assumption was that the availability of brick at the middling level probably depended on the proximity of a builder who employed a brick maker, rather than simply on market forces.\textsuperscript{75}

In regard to their adoption, Ruth Goodman suggested a \textit{slow} pace of change from the medieval open hall with its open hearth. This was at least partly due to the inefficiency of burning fuel beneath a flue, which required three times the volume of timber as the medieval hearth which drew significantly less oxygen into the flame.\textsuperscript{76} In 1577 Harrison questioned the old men of his village to discover what had most changed since their day. They mentioned three things, the first of which was ‘the multitude of chimnies latelie erected’.\textsuperscript{77} This observation would have recalled the first half of the sixteenth century, a time when some considered the change from open hall was being resisted by builders and homeowners. Whilst allied with Goodman’s belief in the slow rate of adoption, Johnson however considered the reason for the apparent reticence was that the hall was seen ‘in the context of the social life that went on within it and the social meanings that it carried’.\textsuperscript{78}

In opposing these theories, Hall suggested an \textit{acceleration} of enclosure, prompted by a change in climate, with colder winters more frequent from the mid sixteenth century, necessity ever the mother of invention.\textsuperscript{79}

What is more certain however is that the choice of house plan gradually became the domain of the customer, rather than the builder. By the end of the seventeenth century

\textsuperscript{74} I. Mortimer, \textit{Time Traveller’s Guide to Elizabethan England} (BBC2, June 14, 2013).
\textsuperscript{75} Johnson, \textit{Housing Culture}, pp.53, 54.
\textsuperscript{76} R. Goodman, \textit{Tudor Monastery Farm} (BBC2, November 14, 2013); Beyond our spatial and temporal constraints, ‘the social benefits of open hearths far outweighed the dis-benefits of a sooty atmosphere’ in the nineteenth-century Hebrides. C. Mackie ‘Sorely against the will of the people: tenant resistance to housing reform in nineteenth-century Lewis’, in ‘Buildings in society international’ conference (Belfast, June 19-21, 2014).
\textsuperscript{77} Edelen, \textit{The Description of England}, pp.200-201.
\textsuperscript{78} Johnson, \textit{Housing Culture}, p.54.
the owner of the new, closed form of house was able to specify the position of doors, windows and other fittings, thus leaving open to the vagaries of personal style and belief the opportunity to introduce a recess into a new fireplace.

There are records of bricks being fired near Ely as early as the fourteenth century, and by the later sixteenth century its manufacture and use had spread from East Anglia where it was employed in significant early medieval structures such as Buckden Palace in Huntingdonshire. Its use in domestic buildings carried with it an obvious status partly, it is suggested, because in the eyes of the reverential its use was so closely allied to large religious structures. This desire to reflect the significance of religious buildings is significant, as was the desire to create a more ceremonial focus around the fire, in reflection of the symbolism of the altar. George Ewart Evans considered that the traditional back to back chimneys (which make up the overwhelming percentage of those studied in this research) ensured the symbolic soul of the house and its productive centre were as closely associated as possible.

It is relevant to note as a point in parallel to the adoption of brick to emulate socially and spiritually significant structures, Harrison’s observation that ‘in times past men were content to dwell in houses built of sallow, willow, plum tree, hardbeam and elm, so that the use of oak was almost wholly for churches, noblemen’s lodgings and navigation’. Harrison’s implication, as evidenced in the stock of remaining dwellings, was that oak was eventually adopted for domestic properties at most levels of society. Therefore, in regard to the domestic employment of a brick or stone chimney, and in light of the possibility that houses may have resonated not only with a spirituality similar to the parish church, but also with a physical similarity, however tangential, it is tempting to consider an individual’s desire to create a niche was as a result of a wish to emulate a similar detail within church.

---

80 Johnson, *An Archaeology of Capitalism*, p.188.
82 A. Clifton-Taylor, *The Pattern of English Building* (1962; London, 1987), pp.210-219. ‘Although the fifteenth century saw a substantial increase in the employment of brick in England it was, except in Hull, almost wholly confined to buildings of importance such as churches, schools and colleges and a few large houses’. p.213.
Hoskins’ post-war theory concerning the ‘great rebuilding’ of Britain during the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has slowly been dismantled – or at least heavily qualified. Nevertheless, vast numbers of dwellings witnessed the construction of a brick chimney in this period, clearly evidenced in the many thousands that remain across the country. Johnson observed that during the period between the mid sixteenth and mid seventeenth century the increasingly wealthy middling sorts chose to spend their money not on their church, but on their home. This was due in part to the abolition of the doctrine of purgatory which had previously offered the sinner an express route to Heaven through the purchase of pardons, and in part to the recurrent state-sanctioned removal of expensive church accoutrements which the populace felt was subject to seemingly irrational and inexplicable change.

The period of their initial construction was also broadly coincident with the dawning requirement by individuals to seek spiritual and familial privacy, and it is therefore appropriate to reflect on the relevant aspects of the Reformation which influenced this. The concomitant opportunity brought about by the fundamental change in religious life which compelled individuals to protect, exhibit and venerate a range of religious accoutrements, in a domestic expression of Catholic orthodoxy, appears to have occurred with Heaven sent timing.

Sale of the Century

Coeval with the gradual development of the brick industry was the rapid and no doubt seemingly continuous diminution of the fabric of Catholic religious society. Spiritual

86 Johnson, English Houses, 1300-1800, pp.109-112. This is evidenced by the date range and description of domestic properties in the English Heritage list descriptions from Devon to Durham. See http://www.english-heritage.org.uk
87 Johnson, English Houses 1300-1800, pp.109, 110.
88 As explored in C. Haigh, ‘From monopoly to minority: Catholicism in early modern England’, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th ser., 31 (1981), pp.129-141; R. Whiting, The Blind Devotion of the People (Cambridge, 1989); A. McLaren, ‘Gender, religion and early modern nationalism: Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots and the genesis of English anti-Catholicism’, The American Historical Review, 107:3 (2002), pp.339-367; The reduction in Catholics is arguable because historians such as Jeffery Hankins and Martin Ingram considered their number to have risen, from 40,000 during Elizabeth’s reign, to 60,000 at the start of the Civil War. J.R. Hankins, ‘Papists, power and puritans:
chaos pervaded many aspects of life and in the loss of one facet, for one group, so another facet, and another group, benefitted. The spiritual and material impacts on the people are here evidenced through the accoutrements purchased to furnish both their homes and their souls.

Officially sanctioned assaults upon religious houses began under Henry VIII in the 1530s. In picking up the wrecking ball Edward VI ordered the confiscation of plate, vestments and other treasures from parish churches, though such directives swiftly reversed, albeit briefly, under Mary who reconciled England with the Roman Church.\(^8^9\) At this point the treasures were duly returned to their churches.\(^9^0\) However, under Elizabeth, the situation finally reversed.

The despoliation of religious buildings allowed for the employment of cheap dressed and sometimes decorated stone in the construction and repair of dwellings, perhaps otherwise insignificant in their demeanour. This may have been considered an extended form of desacralizing, insisted upon by the authorities as part of the requirement to deface and to put to ungodly use the sacred things of the Church.\(^9^1\) There is also evidence of the desacralisation of objects through their utilitarian re-use, such as the conversion of a font to a pig trough.\(^9^2\) The accoutrements associated with the liturgy, including the plate, pyx and candles, described by Malcolm Gaskill as ‘fragments of Heaven on Earth’,\(^9^3\) were confiscated and then, in the course of changes to the law, sold off, and the money used to purchase the newly adopted Book of Common Prayer. Such sales were frequent and comprehensive.\(^9^4\) As an example, in the 1560s at Great St Mary’s parish church in Cambridge the Eucharistic canopy, Lenten veil, vestments, processional crosses and liturgical books were all sold off. In many cases the money

---

\(^9^0\) Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People*, p.2.
received was intended to secure the fabric of the church or to improve the lives of the parishioners. In Haddenham on the fen edge, the sale of vestments ensured sufficient cash for the repair of the church roof and further embanking and drainage works in an attempt to resist flooding.95

The parishioners bought the spoils of these sales, as well as middle men intent on turning a profit.96 Whilst Catholic Church rituals had continued to enjoy official approval in the early sixteenth century, when Henry VIII had been made Defender of the Faith by the Pope,97 it would appear that the same authorities who had orchestrated a sea change in the lives of so many people a few years later had to accept the fact that the vestiges of ritual and their accoutrements would go underground, only to surface in the homes of continually devout Catholics. It is interesting to note that observations made in regard to the iconoclasm of the following century resonated with the activities of the Reformation. Charles Ford stated that ‘Some people would have taken….objects and secreted them….[or] retrieved [them] as heirlooms, or objects of art, re-fetishized…. within another ordering of knowledge, as commodities in a newly emergent sacred order of art’.98

A fine example of this re-fetishization relates to Peter Bright, the Cambridge resident we encountered previously who, in 1545 possessed not only five scochyns, ‘two tables with images’ and 12 candlesticks, but he also kept a court cupboard with ‘certain images’, a cloth, two tapestries and a superaltar in his chamber over the parlour.99 This was a man insistent upon keeping the old religion alive irrespective of, or perhaps as a direct result of, the cultural tide flowing against him, and is a clear example of the individual adoption and use of church appurtenances for domestic veneration.

---

95 Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars, pp.484, 585.
96 Duffy, Saints, Sacrilege and Sedition, pp.122, 123.
Domestic Veneration

Peter Clark and Paul Slack observed that, in between the sales of the sixteenth century and the iconoclasm of the seventeenth century English Catholicism had become a principally rural experience. However, Tessa Watt stated that recent analyses of household inventories supported a theory of cultural unity throughout the reign of Edward VI. Pictures of the Passion, the Virgin and the saints remained perfectly acceptable in private houses throughout the period. Whilst there was an increasing restriction on religious images from the middle of Elizabeth’s reign, the Queen nevertheless vetoed efforts by her bishops and parliaments in 1571, 1576 and 1581 to look too closely into the practices of individuals, and in the Anti-Recusancy Act of 1593 this concern was reiterated by a similar clause, inserted to ensure individual consciences were not molested. Later, under James I there was an anti-Calvinist ‘contrary cultural tide’, and instead of a clean break with Catholicism there was a process of continuingly replacing less acceptable images with more acceptable, though with increasingly restrictive boundaries.

The small, sometimes expensive and significant accoutrements obtained by the middling sorts have an obviously more extravagant parallel in the objects purchased, and the rooms employed for their display, in the homes of the better sorts. In describing particular room functions in country houses, Girouard stated that the closet tended to be richly decorated and often contained its owners’ most prized medals, pictures and curiosities. ‘They were like little shrines at the end of a series of initiatory vestibules’. I argue that the clear parallel in less substantial homes was the small semi-private hall or parlour, containing the fireplace and niche in which religious relics and sacramentals were housed. Sacramentals themselves were a group of blessed objects whose

---

effectiveness was not assured, like that of the sacraments, but depended upon the character of the user, and on the blessing of a priest to give them any spiritual power.  

The Decline in Catholicism

Robert Whiting’s contention was that by the second half of the sixteenth century popular Catholicism was in decline, partly due to the desire of a percentage of the population to find a more rigorous religious authority, and partly due to the more pragmatic aspects of life, including a commitment to authority. Human salvation was of paramount importance, and as far as Protestants were concerned it lay in the Bible, rather than in the institution of the Church. In support of this argument, but motivated by practical concerns, obligation to the monarch was fundamental to the personal constitution of the Englishman. Whiting suggested that an important component of many individuals’ psyche was a hatred of foreigners. The marriage of Queen Mary to the Spanish King Philip ensured that emotions would be directed more forcefully against him than against another Englishman’s form of worship. To this persuasive list was added the perhaps more pressing individual concern of social isolation, particularly in light of the failure of the Northern Rebellion of 1569, which resulted in the Papal Bull of 1570 that sanctioned the assassination of Queen Elizabeth. The subsequent repudiation of Catholics, the threat of excommunication and, most harshly of course, the possibility of physical punishment, helped to persuade many individuals of the benefits of a change of affiliation.

Despite the hiatus caused by Mary in 1553, Whiting considered that popular Catholicism reduced quite rapidly between the 1530s and 1570s. Following the Injunctions of 1536 and 1538, which saw the despoliation of relics in cathedrals, churches and chapels, the destruction of images culminated in total elimination, under

109 Ibid., p.151.
Edward VI. The redundant apparatus of image veneration was either sold, or relegated to long term storage. Whiting considered that some images probably survived.\(^{110}\)

At Morebath in Devon in 1538 a group of onlookers witnessed the removal of the church’s statues and numerous individuals took items away with them. Carved figures including John the Baptist and alabaster plaques from the rood loft were removed, though Duffy was unsure whether they were conscientious Catholics saving as much as possible, or simply souvenir hunters. The vicar of the parish saved what he could. He took to the vicarage a cloth painted with St. Sidwell’s image, and the basin in which her candle had stood.\(^{111}\) In Woodbury in the same county, Whiting noted that the wardens sold all 11 pewter bowls which had formerly stood upon the rood loft to hold tapers.\(^{112}\)

After Mary’s five years as sovereign, during which time some of the accoutrements were returned, Elizabeth recommenced the dismantling, and issued a fresh set of Injunctions for the clampdown on superstition in order to promote what she considered was the true religion.\(^{113}\) Again, there were some positive outcomes, including a benefit to the market economy. The deposition of a monarch was occasionally followed by the sale of church goods,\(^{114}\) though the iconoclasm of this demolition was but one aspect of a lucrative business which included the sale of church lands, the auction of property and the removal of goods to the royal treasury.\(^{115}\)

It can be seen therefore that out of this turbulence came a significant economic and practical benefit for some, attracting sufficient buyers to assist the nascent Protestant Church in its development - and possibly helping to limit the spiritual impact of so great a level of destruction in the minds of those souls who purchased accoutrements and remained devoted to the traditions of the old religion.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., pp.76, 78.
\(^{111}\) Duffy, The Voices of Morebath, p.143.
\(^{112}\) Whiting, The Blind Devotion of the People, p.78.
\(^{113}\) Duffy, The Voices of Morebath, p.170.
\(^{114}\) Whiting, The Blind Devotion of the People, p.80
\(^{115}\) M. Hunter, ‘Iconoclasm and consumption; or, household management according to Thomas Cromwell’, in S. Boldrick and R. Clay (eds), Iconoclasm: Contested Objects, Contested Terms (Aldershot, 2007), pp.51-74.
Candlesticks, Cups and Fireplaces

The psychological result of purchasing such significant items could be nothing but affective of the householder’s mind-set, whilst the impact upon domestic space would have been similarly notable. According to Johnson, the transition from status to class was evidenced in the purchase and employment of moveable items rather than in the architecture of the property. Therefore, the structure of a dwelling began to lose some of its meaning as the new objects to be found within it gained in significance.\textsuperscript{116} This chronological coincidence reinforces my hypothesis that ritual was a catalyst for change and the private confines of the home a vehicle for its expression. Certainly within the home furniture of sufficient significance onto which one might locate a substantial item was growing. Tables were commonly cheaper than beds and linen, and in many inventories the cupboards to be found in the hall were also relatively cheap.\textsuperscript{117} And while it has been considered how salt cellars might be accommodated, the introduction of an expensive latten candlestick, silver cup or pewter plate, designed for ritual use by a priest, would surely have exercised the new owners’ minds, and it is therefore appropriate that the discussion concerning the introduction of masonry fireplaces - as a means of exhibition - be revisited.

Given the current chapter’s coincident but unholy trinity of the demolition of the Catholic Church, the sale of its vestments and the coterminous construction of domestic brick fireplaces, it is feasible that owners sought to include in their new chimney a recess – or niche – to exhibit something of significant spiritual value. The domestic altar was the obvious location. The shape of the majority of the recesses considered here are of a portrait format, though not as commonly uniform in their dimensions as those of an

\textsuperscript{116} Johnson, \textit{Housing Culture}, p.107.

\textsuperscript{117} Parker, \textit{All My Worldly Goods}, II. Of 13 inventories listing cupboards, dated between 1545 and 1560, only on six occasions were they priced individually. The average price was over 4 s., which was cheaper than many other items of furniture. However, caution is required in any analysis of prices, as Parker stated: ‘The values put on their….possessions vary greatly for no obvious reason’, p.i.
early modern brick. Nevertheless, many appear perfectly proportioned to accommodate a plate, cup or small candlestick.

Sacred Inventories - in Light of Candlesticks

Many inventories describe rooms in a particular, hierarchical format, beginning with the hall. In some wills gifting latten or silver candlesticks to family members implied the significance attached to them. Latten candlesticks are mentioned in wills from the period, though never commonly, and they steadily disappeared from the record. During medieval times and into the middle of the sixteenth century latten was essentially reserved for high-quality church goods. It was expensive and was employed for candlesticks, basins, inscription plates, effigies 'and various other objects....Effigies of Edward II and Richard II were apparently of copper and laton’. However, by 1838 the term signified thin, tin coated sheets of iron, used to manufacture common domestic utensils. In an obvious parallel with previous evidence is the reduction in the status of salt, when it was stored in cheap cellars - and eventually became ubiquitous.

Latten made up a significant proportion of the candlesticks in the inventory of the goods of St. Mary’s guild in Boston, dated 1534, though what is equally notable is the number and variety of candlesticks surrounding the altar. ‘Two great candlesticks, two secondary candlesticks….and two lesser candlesticks, two little candlesticks and

---

118 Clifton-Taylor, *The Pattern of English Building*, p.249. ‘Since the thirteenth-century...the variations in the sizes in general use at different dates have been comparatively slight’; However, the bricks fired specifically for the fireplace in Conduit House in Long Melford are later, and range in length from several inches to in excess of 15”.
119 Curle, ‘Domestic candlesticks’, pp.183-214. While Curle offers no dimensions for the candlesticks in his essay, photographs illustrating fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth century examples suggest, on the basis of the proportion of the plug and the base that the vast majority of those on pp.187, 189, 190, 198 and 203 were less than 30cm or 12” tall. Candlesticks were introduced from the Arab world to Europe in the fourteenth century and there were four types in general domestic use by the early modern period:- table candlesticks, candelabra, tapersticks and chamber candlesticks. The first three show marked changes throughout the period but those employed in the private chambers were much more functional in appearance. All examples studied by Michaelis ranged from 6.25” to 13.75” tall. R.W. Michaelis, *Old English Base Metal Candlesticks from the 13th to the 19th Century* (London, 1978), p.40.
120 J. Britton and J. Le Keux, *A Dictionary of the Architecture and Archaeology of the Middle Ages* (no place, 1838), pp.149, 150.
121 Peacock, *English Church Furniture, Ornaments and Decorations*, pp.70, 90, 127, 151, 157, 168, 171.
another standing in front of Mary’. This clearly illustrates the powerful significance of fire and the candlestick in Catholic ritual.122

Secular Inventories - in Light of Candlesticks

In the parish of St. Stevens in St. Albans in Hertfordshire, between the years of 1545 and 1700 there were only six inventories of a total of 143 which mentioned latten candlesticks, though a slightly greater number described latten ‘basons’. However, it is striking that of the 51 wills preceding this, dated from 1418 to 1545, there were 21 bequests for the maintenance of lights, tapers or torches, but only one bequest for a candlestick.123 It is theorised that this later inversion in the number of candles and tapers was as a result of the decline of Catholicism and its attempted small-scale propping by devout individuals. The inclusion of latten in a domestic inventory in the mid sixteenth century points to the ownership and subsequent gifting of something special, something originally employed in church and thus imbued with spiritual meaning. In summarising the St Albans wills and inventories, it is found that the proportion of latten in the ownership of the parishioners, and its gradual disappearance from the records, reflected either a general reduction in a scribe’s inclination to record it, or the steady decline in the population of Catholics over the period, and with that the reduction in its use, allied to the concomitant rise in Protestant orthodoxy.124 Certainly, the Protestant Church sought to abolish the impression that particular objects were imbued with mystical qualities through the application of ritual formulae.125 Nevertheless, and irrespective of the various options available to the early modern individual, the evidence serves to

123 Parker, *All My Worldly Goods*, II. Intriguingly, reference to latten candlesticks increases towards the last date of 1611, indicative of the point that the last of the (possibly Catholic) owners died out and with them the ownership of such candlesticks. There is no mention of the material between 1611 and 1700. The inventory dates are: 1553, 1578, 1595, 1603, 1609, 1611; Hamling, *Decorating the Godly Household*, p.42. Hamling pointed out that Laudian reforms of the 1630s involved the reintroduction of ‘some of the abandoned Catholic ceremonial and church adornments’, and while coincidence cannot be ruled out, it is relevant to note that such adornments ceased to be gifted in wills after the Reformation but before the later reforms.
124 Britton and Le Keux, *A Dictionary of the Architecture and Archaeology*, pp. 149, 150. It is interesting to note that, while Britton and Le Keux assert that by the mid nineteenth century only ‘the commonest domestic utensils are formed’ from latten, the wills and inventories of St. Steven’s parish describe no items of latten between 1611 and 1700.
reinforce my fundamental theory that the spiritual and the domestic were ever conjoined.

Thomas Woodcok’s inventory from 1593 listed three latten candlesticks and a latten mortar and pestle, while Jane Lawson’s inventory from 1557 listed six candlesticks, two latten basins, three latten lavers, one with a cover, two candlesticks and a holy water vat.¹²⁶ Many of these items were used in Catholic Church ceremony but in Lawson’s case they resided in her hall.¹²⁷ She was sufficiently wealthy and pious enough to have owned not only eight candlesticks and her own holy water vat, perhaps purchased at one of the sales of the century, but various impressive pieces of furniture on which they may have been suitably accommodated - had some of them not resided in niches.

Whilst direct primary evidence for the spiritual use of candlesticks in the domestic arena continues to evade discovery, the circumstantial evidence is compelling. Furthermore, there is recent academic support for the theory of their meaning. Hamling considered the candlestick was ‘intended as a rich display piece to evoke meditation on morality and judgement, but it is also worth considering its practical function might contribute to its role as a prompt to pious thought’.¹²⁸

Finally, in a reversal of the current flow of information reinforcing the theory, though equally supportive in its nature, is Judith Middleton-Stewart’s observation of Margaret Rowlond’s bequest to St. Peter’s Church in Dunwich, which included ‘one candlestick of latten, with a pricket, perhaps to hold the Paschal candle’.¹²⁹ At the end of her life it would appear that Margaret Rowlond gave (and possibly even returned) an undoubtedly significant item to the church which she may well have used ritually during her lifetime, within the privacy of her own home.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.158. Alongside the holy water vat and candlesticks stood two Flanders counters with carpets, two chairs, three long formes, a long side table, three pewter basins and a laver.
Despite the possible mistakes made by scribes in writing inventories, the volume of documentary evidence and the dates of the wills indicate that such items were rarely used in domestic property on any significant scale prior to the official despoliation and sale of religious apparatus in the mid sixteenth century, while the apparent cessation of reference to latten candlesticks in the seventeenth century coincided with the gradual reduction in religious turmoil and the erosion of Catholicism within the population.

It is suggested that candlesticks continued to be used in domestic ritual for many years, though fewer and fewer were purchased from church. In a parallel observation, Whiting proposed that, whilst lay prayer for the dead by religious guilds ended peremptorily, the reliance on rosaries, particularly within the home, was probably slower to disappear.\textsuperscript{130}

Evidence from Further Afield

In casting a wider net, more circumstantial evidence of the ritual niche is obtained. Hall recently recorded a fourteenth-century property in Chipping Sodbury, in South Gloucestershire in which she noted a small recess with a hook at its apex, ‘which may be a ritualistic washing niche’.\textsuperscript{131} It is located in the hall which originally featured a large fireplace. This is a very rare observation and an equally rare example, and while not considered a niche for the exhibition of a spiritual object per se, it is nevertheless probable that it was employed for washing one’s hands, in reflection of ritual practice.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{130} Whiting, \textit{The Blind Devotion of the People}, p.70.  \\
\textsuperscript{131} L. Hall, ‘15 Horse Street, Chipping Sodbury, South Gloucestershire’ (unpublished report, 2009).
\end{flushright}
Plate 39 shows the possible ‘ritualistic washing niche’. Chipping Sodbury, Gloucestershire.

During subsequent correspondence with Hall she provided photographs of properties in the Channel Isles which contained ‘lavabos’. In three of the four illustrated here there is a distinctly religious architectural lineage, reminiscent both of the niche in Sodbury and of simple church windows or piscine, appearing as if they had been removed and reconstructed wholesale from a local church. Three are located in the cross passage (now employed as large reception areas), semi-public spaces witnessed upon entry to the house. The fourth is situated within a hall. The intention here appears to have been to ensure that all those who entered the property experienced the lavabo, and whichever object it might have contained.
By this stage in the development of my thesis the link between the church niche and the domestic niche is substantially formed. However, McCormack dismissed the suggestion that domestic niches in the Channel Isles had any connection with Christian ritual. He did however consider they were taken from the church and built into the house, simply to ‘dispose of small quantities of water, just as a piscina in a church’. (Plate 40 illustrates a dished base with drain hole, which McCormack concludes once took water to the outside wall via a narrow channel cut through the stone.\textsuperscript{132}) Whilst drain holes are evidence of their initial use for washing, in his previous publication McCormack precluded their later use as a niche for a chalice or statue, as did his assertion of the apparently post-Reformation date of several of them, though on what basis he made this statement in unexplained.\textsuperscript{133}

Nevertheless, his anti-ritual view actually reinforces my theory that the use of something so vital to religious behaviour in the domestic sphere is an expression of an attitude towards belief, whether negatively or positively spiritual. Its adoption was either a form of de-sacralisation or of re-fetishization, particularly given its high status location and its quality of construction. In combination with a chalice it may even have been considered a commodity in a newly emergent sacred order of art, as proposed by Ford.

\textsuperscript{132} McCormack, ‘Channel Island Houses’, no page numbers.
The second point is that, had these lavabos been relocated from churches, their drain holes would not have miraculously healed, Christ-like. Yet irrespective of this, such a detail would hardly have precluded an alternative use. Indeed, such a detail may have served to amplify the spiritual provenance and thus, its significance as a ritual object. McCormack also stated that recesses were probably situated in the cross passage because that was the location where visitors were greeted and welcomed and offered water to wash their hands.\textsuperscript{134} Notwithstanding the obvious religious parallel of washing one’s hands with the water in the stoup located in the south porch or against the south wall of the nave in many churches, the location of the lavabo is significant in a similar way to the location of various motifs described in forthcoming chapters. In foretelling evidence in the chapter on graffiti, their siting at liminal points within a dwelling offers the individual the opportunity to be in close proximity to an object (or motif), in a way that reflected remembered practices, borrowed from the medieval Church but personalised by the individual in the privacy of their home. The final possibility for its siting in the cross passage involves the enduring protection of the interior of the dwelling against the ingress of evil, defined here as ‘spiritual frequency’, and explored further in the following chapters on taper burns and concealment.

Prior to McCormack’s observations, but in a similar vein, Joan Stevens also dismissed the ritual-use theory. She considered that lavabos (or benitiers as she termed them) were actually piscinas, misnamed and misunderstood.\textsuperscript{135} Of 30 that she listed in the Channel Isles, all but two were situated on ground floors and most faced south, though never north. Again, clearly reminiscent of the stoup in the south porch of many churches, though Stevens made no mention of this. Her theory concerned the storage of lanterns or candles, used to assist people moving about in the dark.\textsuperscript{136} This is supported by Edward Pinto’s observation that recesses located in a wall at the bottom of stairs were designed for candlesticks, though he offered nothing by way of evidence for this assertion, and in the current study area there are no recesses in this location.\textsuperscript{137} In response to Stevens’ theory, it would appear that the evidence for this use, whether

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Ibid.}, p.215.
\textsuperscript{135} In correspondence, John McCormack clarified that the term ‘benitier’ was actually created in the nineteenth or twentieth century, and so he chose to use the traditional French term ‘lavabo’, instead. December 17, 2013.
\textsuperscript{136} Stevens, \textit{Old Jersey Houses}, pp.98, 99.
\textsuperscript{137} E. Pinto, \textit{Treen and Other Wooden Bygones} (London, 1969), p.115.
primary or circumstantial, is difficult to trace and, given the eminently portable nature of candlesticks, this elaborate form of construction simply for their storage appears somewhat excessive, particularly given that many households contained more than a single candlestick.

Thus it would seem that neither functional use theory has shed much light on the subject, though as a final observation Stevens did acknowledge the potential for desacralization. She stated that ‘Deliberate debasement to the lowly domestic use is one possible explanation and it was in keeping with the anger of the reformers’.138 In proposing this theory she has, in a similar way to McCormack, furthered my theory that niches were used, in one way or another, to express the beliefs of individuals, through ritual. Whilst the geographical and spatial locations of these particular forms of niche appear to be limited to the ground floors of farmhouses in the Channel Isles, nevertheless their sacred origins and the meanings behind their domestic application are broadly reflective of activity in other parts of Britain, including the southern fen.

Plate 44. Kimpton Manor, Hampshire.

Back on the mainland, there are a limited range of niches, both imaginative in their design and similarly ecclesiastical in their provenance, though substantially less frequent in domestic property, than in church. In a dwelling in Hampshire, Hall and her colleague Edward Roberts discovered a niche immediately adjacent to a large mid fifteenth-century stone fire surround which featured a neatly carved vertical slot in the jamb to provide either heat or light to the item within. Hall stated that ‘Storage seems unlikely as the construction implies it never had a door. One suggestion is that, in view of the building’s original status as a rectory, the recess may have housed a religious statue, with the squint providing illumination’.139

138 Stevens, Old Jersey Houses, p.100.
139 Hall, ‘Fixtures and fittings’, p.89.
This is significantly more illuminating. The early date of the fireplace, proven by dendrochronologically dating the timber bressummer to 1444/5, and its provenance as a former rectory, help to reinforce the contention that such niches existed during the influential days of the Catholic Church, when iconolatry was essential to its orthodoxy and when many early, high-status buildings were being erected in stone and brick. Hall considered the side-lit niche ‘a unique feature’. However, Trudy West earlier described a fireplace which had been removed from a house in Essex in 1906 and contained a recess in the jamb which featured a squint on its back wall with a sliding shutter. She believed that the property was originally in the ownership of the Fraternity of Jesus, which had begun in 1468, though was altered to its existing state shortly after the Dissolution. She felt that the squint may have been ‘directed to an altar’.

In compounding the squint theory, I visited Edzell Castle in Scotland in August 2012 and found a neatly carved jamb piercing a fireplace in which, four hundred years previously, there may have stood something worthy of its own personal illumination.

In reflecting upon the possible adoption of a domestic squint to illuminate something of spiritual significance, it is necessary briefly to consider the probable genealogical links with sacred architecture.

---

Plate 45 showing the squint at Edzell Castle, Angus.

140 Ibid., p.89
Plate 46. Church of All Saints, Burnham Thorpe, Norfolk.

This squint in Norfolk is situated within the masonry junction between the nave and the chancel, at the point at which the rood screen would have been erected.\textsuperscript{142} Its diminutive proportions presented one or two local gentry families with a glimpsed view of an aspect of the ceremony, or of a holy object, which would have offered them an increased experience of the liturgy, but ensured a heightened degree of mystery surrounded it, a momentary glimpse of the link between the church and the home, and a brief insight into the mind of the early modern individual.

Conclusion

I have shown, through a wealth of circumstantial evidence both in religious and domestic contexts, how in designing and building an early modern home the Catholic individual’s spiritual values, and their consequent physical manifestations, came to be expressed within its fabric.\textsuperscript{143} Whether their rituals were compelled to be enacted within the home or not, such display represented an individual’s belief, and God was revered through the objects within the niche, without the attendant interest or trouble caused by those beyond the front door.

Whilst much of the evidence has been gathered from the sixteenth century, when religious turmoil was at its peak, and when brick chimneys began to be constructed in some quantity, evidence from the following century substantiates the argument for

\textsuperscript{142} English Heritage List Entry no. 1239270.

\textsuperscript{143} Circumstantial evidence in this chapter is exclusive of contemporary paintings, which proved to be of little assistance. In the later sixteenth century candlesticks were less frequently painted ‘as art had freed itself from religious conventions’ and paintings of domestic interiors had yet to become fashionable. Curle, ‘Domestic candlesticks’, p.197.
ownership of religious objects, and even suggests continued possession from the previous turbulence. During the Civil War in 1642 soldiers confiscated and burnt Catholic artefacts found within the home, including books, images and crucifixes, illustrative of a Catholic rump and the undeniable spiritualisation of the household.¹⁴⁴

In the analogy of the voice, this projection of expression was conscious, confident and unconcerned about the occasional dissenting comment, because while the country slowly moved to a Protestant State, during the early stages these patrons remained in the majority. But as time passed and religious turmoil faded, so niches became the storage facilities for people of other religious backgrounds, in days less turbulent.

¹⁴⁴ J. Spraggon, Puritan Iconoclasm During the Civil War (Woodbridge, 2003), p.119.
3 TRANSITION
Taper Burns

The third chapter will explore the reasons behind the employment of taper burns and consider their frequency, distribution and size, in order to illustrate how they were adopted by people with a range of beliefs, and adapted to address a variety of issues. This chapter is the central, transitionary one which indicates both a psychological and physical move away from the semi-private spaces of the ground floor which witnessed confident, outward shows of expression, towards the most private spaces, to be considered in the following chapters.

In the analogy of the voice the tone becomes a little hushed, conscious of the possible upset that some elements of the communication might cause, because whilst individual communication with them occurred only occasionally, their visual permanence was a prompt to all who witnessed them.

The Catholic Church’s employment of candles for their association with the calendrical year, their genealogical links to folk magic, their connotations with metamorphosis and their attendant heat and light enabled the personal, spiritual use of fire within the home as an expression reflective of multiple beliefs.

It is generally acknowledged that ritual protection as a practise was first considered nationally in the modern era by Ralph Merrifield in 1987, though George Ewart Evans described activities in East Anglia a generation before. While Merrifield’s book on the subject exposed the previously hidden world of folk magic to a broader audience, it did little to enhance the understanding of superstitious practices and made no mention of taper burns, an area only lately considered to express belief.

---
More recently, Virginia Lloyd noted that Keith Thomas’ seminal work on magic, whilst bringing it to light for historians, provided very little archaeological evidence for the movements and beliefs that he recorded.3

‘Taper’ was the common name for a candle used particularly in church,4 and in her initial work on their history Lloyd intended to identify a discrete folk tradition and to interpret findings contextually. She did not therefore map distribution or quantify frequency. The reason for such parameters concerned the potential to misinterpret evidence, as the rate of survival of timber-framed houses was erratic, particularly given the effects of fire, fungus and fashion. Lloyd’s analysis involved dating, experiments, art historical research, oral history and archaeological evidence.5

A Poker Hand?

Ewart Evans considered the creation of taper burns the result of applying a red-hot poker to the timber. He believed they were the result of children experimenting, though he also suggested they may have been caused by an individual testing the temperature of the poker before plunging it into the copper beer-muller.6 However, this has been comprehensively discounted by Dean and Hill, who were unable to recreate a burn to match historic examples using a poker. My own response to this speculation concerns the odd location of many of the burns. Why would an individual mark a timber in a chamber which features no fireplace, or repeat the process many times on a wall plate located in close proximity to a thatched roof if he was simply testing its temperature?

---

6 Ewart Evans, The Pattern Under the Plough, p.37.
Taper Experiments

Dating taper burns remains difficult. Lloyd, and more recently John Dean and Nicholas Hill, carried out various experiments to discover the possible rate and depths of burn.

Rush lights burned at approximately 2.5cms per minute, a rate of consumption which led to Lloyd’s conclusion that rushes were employed simply to illuminate a room as one moved through it, rather than as a fixed source of light. Nevertheless, they may have been fitted to the timber frame of a house with wet clay cups as a fixed form of illumination, which could account for a lack of visual evidence of any attachment and the resulting, accidental and seemingly random burn. However, in experiments Lloyd proved that the flame created by this form of light was indistinct, and quite dissimilar to the teardrop shaped burn witnessed on many existing timbers.

Dean and Hill also carried out various other experiments. They concluded that it took between five and 10 minutes to create a notable blackening of the timber surface with a distinctive teardrop and a bowl at the base of up to three millimetres in depth. Examples which feature a deeper bowl must therefore have been revisited and the carbon crust which had formed had been scratched out and the flame re-applied. Dean and Hill employed oak in their experiments, consistent with the timber used in the majority of bresummers in this research. They also discovered that the high melting point of beeswax, which made it suitable for handling, also made fine tapers. Of the animal fats it was historically considered that mutton was most suited, as it dried the hardest. However, they found that despite sheep fat having a slightly higher melting point than either pig lard or cow dripping, none was considered entirely suited to creating consistent burns. Nevertheless, they conceded that mutton fat was almost as effective as wax, while being substantially cheaper, which would probably have accounted for its widespread application.

---

9 In discussion with John Dean, March 25, 2013.
In major towns during the fifteenth century travelling candle makers visited larger houses on a regular basis and made candles from waste fat, which had been collected in barrels. This form of candle offered a weak light and required regular snuffing and trimming because the simple, loosely twisted wicks burned slower than the fat, which caused the fat to fall into it. Pinto stated that in the mid seventeenth century such candles cost 5s. for 12lbs, whereas the contemporary author Gilbert White noted in the eighteenth century that they cost on average 3s. per pound, evidence of a notable rate of inflation.\(^ {10} \) All the while the poor made their own rushlights.

In summary, Dean and Hill’s experiments suggested that tapers were most commonly made using twisted hemp wicks and mutton fat. They were generally no more than seven millimetres in diameter and created a burn considered average in my research.

The Background

In the background of Brueghel’s painting ‘The Alchemist’, Lloyd pointed to the piece of paper pinned over the head of the alchemist and suggested that the marks seen to the right of it were taper burns, and that one could assume therefore that superstitious activity played a fundamental role in the lives of peasants in Dutch society - and that Breughel was mocking them.

\[\text{Plate 47. Pieter Brueghel’s ‘The Alchemist.’ 1558.}\]

Burns are also found within churches, usually on the north door, as in Burrough Green, in Cambridgeshire, though they can also be found on the south door, as in Needham Market, in Suffolk.

Plate 48. Taper burns on the north door of St Augustine of Canterbury Church, Burrough Green, Cambridgeshire.

In popular lore the north door was said to be the Devil’s door through which he was ejected at baptisms, though Nicholas Groves disputes this assumption.\textsuperscript{11} It was also used in Catholic processions, but it is suggested here that arguably innovative ritual choreography, such as this, was banned, either as a result of the proclamation of February 1548 entitled ‘Prohibiting private innovations in ceremonies’, or through the Act of Uniformity in the following year.\textsuperscript{12}

Lloyd offered a variety of alternative reasons for the widespread use of burns, amongst other apotropaic symbols. The effect of poor harvests for people of the lower sorts inevitably had a detrimental impact. Indeed, research into apotropaic practise has highlighted a link between the economic situation of the family, the national and international economy and the employment of a range of such practices,\textsuperscript{13} though this causal connection is questioned in my research. Furthermore, the Reformation and the Civil War came within a period of 100 years and Lloyd acknowledged the importance of the events on the national psyche and the potential for personalised responses to such major conflicts.\textsuperscript{14} The previous reliance on the saints to protect individuals was so ingrained in the consciousness that their wholesale removal must have severely shaken many parishioners in the period following the Reformation.

\begin{itemize}
  \item In discussion with John Dean, February 11, 2013; In discussion with Nicholas Groves, August 2, 2014.
\end{itemize}
The final theory that Lloyd considered related to boundaries, both physical and metaphysical, and the drive by people of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to define them and protect them from evil. For instance, roof timbers might have been marked in recognition of their role as an interface between Heaven and earth – perhaps, in current parlance, a thin place - and by extension between man and God.\textsuperscript{15} However, Johnson’s theory considered the definition of boundaries the result of the need to contain and discern the domestic commonwealth from the influences of the outside world, a tension which only slowly dissipated through the development of ideas of domesticity in later centuries.\textsuperscript{16}

In a more recent article Dean and Hill applied further experimental archaeology to the question of tapers, and they remain confident that deliberate burns were heavily associated with Catholics in the seventeenth century, though there also remains disagreement within the vernacular architectural community.\textsuperscript{17} Burns discovered in Wawel Cathedral in Poland and Laval Castle, in France indicate a broad geographical distribution and the architectural breadth of building so marked.

Plates 49a and 49b. Huntsman and Hounds Cottage, The Street, Metfield.

\textsuperscript{15} Lloyd, Dean and Westwood, ‘Burn marks as evidence of apotropaic practices’, p.68.  
On the fireplace bresummer in a cottage in Metfield in Suffolk, a 20 year old named Benjamin Edwardes inscribed his name and the date on the bresummer in what would have been a relatively newly inserted fireplace. On the same beam are found several taper burns, including a heavily marked run, which appear to have been created in situ, as well as several runic marks and a chi rho symbol. Whilst there is no documentary evidence of a correlation between Edwardes and the burns, the information contributes to the circumstantial evidence discussed throughout this chapter which supports Dean’s theory of seventeenth-century application. However, Edwardes was probably a Protestant as he is buried in the church graveyard, immediately opposite. This aspect of their origin is discussed further, and the application of graffiti, in the following chapter.

John McCann was not convinced of the nature of the application and employment of burn marks, though his sceptical response offered little by way of alternative. The impression of his response is of a cautionary yet speculative reaction to Dean and Hill’s work, seemingly a lone voice continuing to question their research.

The Research

Why is there such an incidence of taper burns and what did they signify? The recent debate between Timothy Easton and Dean and Hill focused on whether they were Catholic in origin, or whether they derived from folk magic. However, as discussed previously, such clear spiritual delineations are intractably difficult to ascertain and, in acknowledging Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant’s statement that ‘all representation

---

is complex and coded, which means that its subsequent interpretation depends on understanding the original context of production, its limits and possibilities’, gauging this with no primary documentary evidence remains challenging.

The debate surrounding the extent and arrangement of these burns is rather less heated and, whilst acknowledging Lloyd’s concern not to map precise distribution patterns for fear of misinterpretation, I have made an attempt in order to further discussion and contribute to knowledge. Burns created on timber bresummers are evident in 27 cases in the current research, 19 of which are in the study area. This chapter will examine how and why they occurred and attempt to explain what the expectations of those who witnessed them might have been.

The study of taper burns inevitably interacts with the study of candles. As Hastings stated, fire was an element whose prominence derived from the sense of symbolism essential in the natural world and in the forces evident in one’s surroundings. My research states that the creation and employment of niches to accommodate candles, amongst other items, and the application of taper burns, occurred at a similar time, generally between the mid sixteenth and the first three quarters of the seventeenth centuries, indicative of a spiritual and social desire for expression and arguably reflective of a collective ritual origin. Eamon Duffy stated that in the Catholic tradition candles were probably burned before the image of Mary in the church. Indeed, as Matthew Hunter noted, candles themselves could become objects of veneration, as in the case of a taper held by our Lady of Cardigan, a place which consequently became a destination for pilgrims.

At this point it is pertinent to note that of the 27 examples, only in five instances did a property contain burns and no niche. Whilst the data remains statistically insignificant it is nevertheless clear that in this research the incidence of both burns and niches

---

20 J. Hastings (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, III (Edinburgh, 1913), p.188.
22 M. Hunter, ‘Iconoclasm and consumption; or, household management according to Thomas Cromwell’, in S. Boldrick and R. Clay (eds), Iconoclasm: Contested Objects, Contested Terms (Aldershot, 2007), pp.51-73.
categorically overwhelms those properties which feature only one or the other.²³ It is considered that this inter-relationship implies a connection between individuals and their desire for spiritual expression, and the various approaches available to the individual to express that belief, and the ensuing possibility that one form of motif acted psychologically as a prompt for another.

This data is beneficial in shedding light on this otherwise rarely considered aspect of domestic religious history. The sample was effectively self-selected on the basis of survival and the possible architectural interest as described in the Introduction. Nevertheless, the disposition of burns on bresummers raises questions of distribution, as does the proximity of host dwellings to their parish church.²⁴

The Significance and Ceremony of Fire

According to A.E. Crawley fire elicited the two poles of sentiment. Fear and respect of its devastating power and gratitude for its warmth and utility, from which evolved a broad range of tradition and metaphor.²⁵ Duffy’s analysis of late medieval Catholicism made clear the association between ceremony and the laity and the reliance on burning candles to express solemnity in various rituals. In describing Candlemas he explained that the remains of the candle – the celestial stump – were taken away by the laity. The distribution of these sacred candles, and the power they offered in defeating evil tended to dominate the celebration. Clerical mistrust of folk custom was perhaps understandable and is evidenced by Henry Parker who believed the laity employed these sacramentals for disreputable purposes. He noted that witches could drop wax from the holy candle onto the footprints of individuals they hated, which resulted in their victims’ feet rotting off. ²⁶

²³ See Appendix 2.
²⁴ See Appendices 3, 4 and 5.
Herein lies the heart of the controversy concerning early modern Catholicism and its ever-present shadow, folk custom. William Prynne, the seventeenth-century polemicist, stated that the ceremony of Candlemas had effectively masked the pre-Christian rite of Februa, who was originally honoured with burning tapers ‘as the Papists in imitation of them now offer to the Virgin Mary’. For nearly a millennium the laity had practised Catholicism and yet, their innate sense of the world around them had developed at a much earlier date, and had been kept alive by the activities of those outside the established Church. Amongst the personal considerations of the populace through a substantial period of time, reliance on cunning folk, astrologers and witches sustained a parallel spiritual realm. This realm, by default, worked hand in hand with official religion, uncomfortable bedfellows perhaps, but necessary ones for a population who sought physical and spiritual solace in a world full of illness and natural disaster.

Girouard noted previously that the home was considered the domestic extension of the church, in which could be seen the symmetry of the fireplace, and the physical and spiritual significance of its form and associated activities, reflected in the altar in its church. However, whilst traditionally associated with Catholicism, I suggest that not only Catholics, but recusants, church papists, the indiscernible middle, (perhaps even including members of the Family of Love), Protestants and perhaps even puritans adopted the taper as a personal, domestic expression of devotion. In support of this, analogous activity performed within church points to the ready adoption of a range of practices. During Mass, the less well informed laity were encouraged to recite whichever prayers they knew, with the result that the priest and the people followed an idiosyncratic range of religious observances. Nigel Yates concurred. He considered the laity simply as a group of observers who performed their own individual devotions in parallel with the accepted ritual.

29 Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars, p.198.
30 Ruth Goodman also described this parallel in Tudor Monastery Farm, BBC2, November 14, 2013.
31 In correspondence with Diarmaid MacCulloch, he noted that the Family were very distinct, and represented a very determined radicalism, quite distinct from the indiscernible middle which I describe.
The continued hold of fire over people through ritual and ceremony intensified its reverence. Individual testators commonly specified that the torches which burned around their bodies at their funerals should subsequently be given to the church to burn at the altar at the sacring time. Duffy stated that the maintenance of the altar lights, especially during church services, had become the most popular manifestation of devotion in late medieval wills. Myriad guilds were established for keeping the lights at various ceremonies, and at Holy Trinity church in Bottisham during the later medieval period such a guild was founded to maintain a candle before the image of the Trinity during festivals. Whilst contributing a coin during a visit to a saint’s relics was considered the most effective way to gain his supernatural assistance, vowing a candle was considered particularly beneficial if the overall length of the wick equalled the length and breadth of the stricken individual’s body. However, this practise was looked at with suspicion by the clergy, who considered it semi-magical. The recorder of Henry VI’s miracles referred to it as ‘more moderno laicorum’, a phrase chosen to ensure he distanced himself from the practice.

Duffy stated that the texts prescribed for the Candlemas feast emphasized Heavenly light shining in the darkness of earthly sin, and that during the ritual candles were blessed by virtue of the holy cross, which were consequently imbued with power wherever they were lit.

The domestic use of candles was reiterated where personal prayer was expected to be undertaken on a daily basis. This domestication of the rite amounted to a fundamental relocation of religious activity and, following the spiritual confusion of the 1640s and 1650s, when further ecclesiastical ceremonies had been ejected from the Church, the continued acts of re-housing them within the home sustained the traditions. George Herbert stated ‘When light is brought in, God send us the light of Heaven…Light is a

36 Ibid., p.134.
39 Ibid., pp.19, 15, 281.
great blessing, and as great as food, for which we give thanks: and those that think this
superstitious, neither know superstition nor themselves’.41

Individual Privacy

Of the houses in the sample, many feature exposed framing, in which a straightforward
analysis of the incidence of burns has been made. However, a significant minority
included timber bresummers and studs which had been overbuilt or decorated out, such
that a thorough analysis of all timbers was impossible, making any assessment only ever
partial.

Johnson’s theory of closure suggested that houses systematically evolved from open
forms, in which the timber framing was expressed either internally or externally, to
closed forms in which much of the frame was covered over, coeval with its physical
compartmentalisation, partly reflective of the early modern individual’s evolving
concerns for personal solitude. The increasing rate of literacy during the period led to
individual reading which, he suggested, resulted in a heightened sense of self, which in
turn led to an increase in privacy.42

When analogous thought was so fundamental to perceptions of one’s dwelling,
consideration was bound to be given to the connection between public and private
space. I contend that the distinct differences between being outside and within the home
enabled, and perhaps even furthered, ideological connections between individuals where
closeness was central to meaning. Richardson stated that ‘Emotion is closely linked to
the spaces of the household. Intimate actions and strong emotions are domestic in the
sense that they have no place outside the doors of the home’.43

41 G. Herbert, A Priest to the Temple, or the Country Parson, His Character and Rule of Holy Life (1652;
42 M. Johnson, Housing Culture: Traditional Architecture in an English Landscape (London, 1993), pp.111,
110.
43 C. Richardson, Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England (Manchester, 2006),
p.195; For a history of emotion see F.B. Alberti, Matters of the Heart: History, Medicine and Emotion
(Oxford, 2010).
Female Influence

Johnson observed a gender difference in the way that houses were used and decorated, though he suggested the furnishing of the hall and parlour may have been equally the result of female as well as male involvement.\textsuperscript{44} Alexandra Walsham described the activities of female recusants, and noted that heavy fines were imposed on the husbands of women who refused to attend church. It eventually dawned on administrators that the intractability of wives did not by default imply that their husbands were benign Protestants being ignored by their wilful women, but that they might in fact have been similarly recusant, though in a more disingenuous manner. In 1606 an Act was passed that ensured the non-conformity of a wife was a sufficient ground on which to deprive a husband of promotion in public office.\textsuperscript{45} The point that female religious influence within the home raises, concerns the very language of burns, articulated through their incidence, distribution and scale.

Probable Uses

My research questions Easton’s and Dean’s conclusions that tapers were applied by individuals from a discrete range of religious backgrounds and in response to a limited range of concerns. Certainly, invoking protection for the body and soul seemed almost second nature. Thomas Ady described charms from Popish times still in use during the mid seventeenth century by some rural inhabitants for the cure of cattle and men, women and children, and for making bread and butter.\textsuperscript{46} The view of various philosophers following the Great Fire of London was that ‘nothing happeneth by chance which is the opinion of desperate and atheistical peoples’,\textsuperscript{47} perhaps a biased description but certainly a definition which described a substantial number of people.

\textsuperscript{44} M. Johnson, An Archaeology of Capitalism (Oxford, 1996), pp.163-166.
\textsuperscript{46} T. Ady, A Candle in the Dark: Or, a Treatise Concerning Witches and the Nature of Witchcraft (London, 1656), p.58.
A great number of medieval guilds met in the guild-holder’s house, which might explain the greater incidence of burns in some properties, or for a particular concentration of burns in a certain part of a house. However, this collective medieval devotion was eradicated by Henry VIII, essentially demolishing their raison d’être. Nevertheless, it seems they were easily assimilated back into the parish, though as mute witness to their practices they may have left the evidence of taper burns.

While the motives behind the application of taper burns doubtless varied the underlying theme which links them relates to the protection of the applicants and their kin from harm, inward and outward, physical and metaphysical, as well as the protection of their property and livestock. An optimistic appraisal of their employment concerns the transformation of Christ’s people, as Hastings described, ‘to be like the candle which gives light unto all that are in the house’. A pessimistic appraisal involves Easton’s belief that all burns were in response to the fear of witches and their predilection for fire.

The additional variable to be considered alongside their location is their size. Burns large and small are expressed in the various locations about the home, with little discernible regularity.

For a degree of literary clarity and in an attempt to unpick motive, the foregoing has therefore been arranged into paragraphs concerning firstly the primary semi-private rooms, namely hall and parlour, which were witness to the most frenetic activity, followed by discussion on the various sizes of burn, found in most rooms of the home. The adoption of more than one system of categorization is reflective of the inevitable overlap of form and distribution, and mirrors the various motives behind their application.

---

49 Herbert, A Priest to the Temple, p.157, in Hazlitt, Dictionary of Faiths and Folklore, p.149.
50 As considered by Lloyd, ‘The ritual protection of buildings in East Anglia 1500-1800’; and Lloyd, Dean and Westwood ‘Burn marks as evidence of apotropaic practices’, in Wallis and Lymer (eds), A Permeability of Boundaries?
51 Hastings, Encyclopaedia, III, p.188.
The Fireplace

Of the 27 properties which feature taper burns, 25 exhibit them on the bresummer over the fireplace in either the hall, the parlour or both – and 17 of which are within the primary study area. The obvious reflection on their application in these rooms concerns the level of awareness of the applicant to those around them. Clearly, whoever created the marks was aware of their symbolism, and of his or her activity. They appear to have been entirely unconcerned about the impact they would have had upon witnesses, and this would have been feasible only if their actions had been understood and tolerated by those who witnessed the practice, or experienced its aftermath – which is interesting, given that many of the houses were inhabited by yeomen and gentlemen, whose day to day dealings would surely have been coincident with churchmen or mutual friends in positions of influence. Indeed, given the proximity of several to their parish churches, it is difficult to see how the priest could have been left unaware of the markings. Thus, a sliding scale of incidence might therefore correlate to the degree of knowledge, or indeed the acquiescence or support of the local clergy, if not the Church, as much as the religious affiliations of the applicant.

In Wetherden in Suffolk, a late medieval hall house situated immediately opposite the parish church features a row of moulded plaster coats of arms above the main fireplace, representative of the desire for heraldic respectability and an acknowledgement of the occupants’ association with the influential families of the day. The shields belonged to powerful families and medieval corporations, and were characteristic of the second half of the sixteenth century. Beneath these symbols stand a range of burns located centrally on the bressummer.

---

52 The families of De la Pole, Brandon, Grey and Howard are represented. The De la Poles, Brandons and Greys included family members who became Dukes of Suffolk during the early sixteenth century, while the Howards were Dukes of Norfolk, with landholdings in Suffolk. Members of the Grey and Brandon family were notable Protestants. Henry, Duke of Suffolk was executed in 1554, having attempted to place his daughter Lady Jane Grey upon the throne. Private correspondence between the current owners and T.H.S. Duke at the College of Arms, March 16, 2011; C.W. Scott-Giles Shakespeare’s Heraldry (1950; London, 1971), pp.171-188.

Plates 50a and 50b show the shields and the burns on the beam. Stoakes and Lime Tree Cottage, Church Street, Wetherden.

Illustration 13 shows the late medieval planform with the location of the taper burns and shields.

This relationship of potentially conflicting messages raises several questions. Primary amongst them the chronology of application. Did the owners of the carvings execute the burns, or were they carried out by earlier or later residents? In any event, shields and burns sit adjacent to one another, with neither exhibiting attempts at defacement, by aggrieved subsequent residents. It is also pertinent to note that the bresummer was not hacked at a later date to accommodate coats of plaster, a fashion which would have served to conceal the burns. The suggestion here is that both forms of message were applied by individuals endowed with a broad spiritual appreciation, and/or a degree of pragmatism that enabled both political and religious moderation.

While there exists only oblique and metaphorical reference to the employment of taper burns during the period, there is evidence of the concerns of various individuals over private devotions, generally. Gilbert Ironside asked ‘must they pray in private and secret, otherwise than as the Church hath taught them?’ If such household worship was to be carried out, he stated that an individual ‘must keep himself within the compass of
his own charge, not admitting any [worshippers] of other places; for then he becomes offensive to the state’. The lack of documentary evidence, and the passing observations of authors on ‘household worship’ suggests the collective understanding of this form of activity was so common that it required no reference. Johnson described the anthropological theory known as habitus as ‘a shared understanding of how to get on [and] how to behave; it is reinforced by everyday actions whose meanings are so ‘obvious’ that they do not require explanation’.55

Patterns of Evidence

Dean considered taper burns to have been largely applied during the seventeenth century as a slow-burning Catholic response to the seismic shifts caused by the Reformation. David Underdown’s observation reflected and expanded upon the thrust of Dean’s view. Two societies, increasingly polarized between rich and poor, inhabited and perpetuated an unsettled world, in which some groups looked for alternative ways of creating beliefs about their environment and the universe beyond. Therefore, he argued, it should not come as a surprise that in the seventeenth century people attempted to explain their world in spiritual terms.

In 1603 Roger Gwynne, a Catholic priest, estimated that fully a third of the population remained secretly papist. Whether he honestly considered the figure that high or was simply peddling religious propaganda, it actually appears rather small in light of the notable frequency of taper burns found in the study area - if indeed, as Dean proposed, their manifestation was as a result of a rump of Catholic expression. It is intriguing, particularly given the current state of understanding, that the study area at this time was

54 G. Ironside, Seven Questions of the Sabbath Briefly Disputed After the Manner of the Schooles etc. (Oxford, 1637), pp.268-269.  
55 Johnson, English Houses, 1300-1800, p.72.  
56 In discussion with John Dean, February 19, 2012.  
predominantly Protestant, puritan and, subsequently, non-conformist in its general character.59

Much of the emerging evidence in the southern fen supports Dean’s contention on dates of application, though a dwelling in Kirtling features a horizontal taper burn applied to the head of a door on a house which English Heritage considers to be sixteenth century. This is perhaps a particularly early example, or one whose date of origin may be incorrect. Other clear examples of pre-installation taper burns come from Metfield, in Suffolk, illustrated below, and Wetherden, shown previously.

Plates 51 and 52. Both burns were clearly applied prior to the installation of the timber, and may represent the carpenter’s supplication to protect the property from harm. In the case of Kirtling, the taper is on the external façade of the door head, and was probably the primary entrance to the farmhouse in the sixteenth century. Thatched House in Kirtling and Huntsman and Hounds Cottage, in Metfield.

Plates 53 and 54 showing rounded forms of burn made in a slight draught, and before cracking occurred. Thatched House in Kirtling and White Roses in Reach.

This evidence shows pre-completion burns, the rounded tops the result of side draughts created in the framing shop or the incomplete

dwelling, by the builder when the wood was still quite wet.\textsuperscript{60} Dean and Hill’s experiments illustrated that a neat, pointed burn could only be achieved in a room with no air movement, and therefore not in a framing shop. Thus, the majority of symmetrical and teardrop-shaped burns had to have been carried out within the completed home.\textsuperscript{61}

Nevertheless, there is controversy over this element of their research. Robert Meeson noted that in Suffolk most taper burns had been made during their construction, while those in churches had been added afterwards. However Meeson’s findings are questioned in my research.\textsuperscript{62} In Metfield, amongst several burns located throughout the property, only the single example appeared to have been made prior to installation. In Wetherden the property featured several dozen burns on two bresummers and occasional studs, none of which appeared to have been created during construction, while in Battisford, considered further on, amongst a notably quantity of burns on a range of timbers only one had been created ex situ.

During the early modern period Manor Farm in Bolnhurst in Bedfordshire was witness to an atmosphere almost tangible with concern, as evidenced in the 22 burns applied along the length of a single bresummer, some many times over, the expression of a desire for assistance that may have been articulated over several decades. This evidence raises issues with Lloyd’s implication of a direct link between the economic situation of the family and the employment of a range of apotropaic practices, because this property was a manor house with a (presumably) substantial landholding.

Five burns on the left and six on the right of this bresummer lean subtly inwards, illustrative not of ex-situ application, but of the movement experienced by the timber as the brick supporting piers subsided through deterioration and loading of the foundation.

\textsuperscript{60} In correspondence with an antiques dealer and McCurdy timber framing company, it was considered that cracking usually occurred from within a few weeks of conversion of the timber.
\textsuperscript{61} In discussion with John Dean, February 18, 2012.
A slow process, the burns here are evidence of the movement and subsequent reconstruction of the brick piers, a chronological indicator of the length of time over which they were applied. The architectural evidence suggests that in the following century the bressummer was stabilised on new piers.

It is interesting to note that in this property, which contains a significant number of exposed timbers within its multiple late medieval and early modern rooms, burns were only discover on this single bressummer. The property stands alone, on a large site, and was no doubt thatched during the early modern period. It would appear therefore that Lloyd’s theory concerning the use of sympathetic magic, applied to the liminal points in the home to inoculate the fabric from further burning, is in this instance open to question.63 Easton also concluded that apotropaic marks were representative of sympathetic magic, created to protect a property from witches who started domestic fires.64 Lightning, on the other hand, was considered distinctly the work of the devil, and the occasional burnt house the result. John Brady stated that candles which had been blessed by a priest ‘on a day of purification’, were lit as a charm against thunder and lightning.65

The residents at Manor Farm in Bolnhurst experienced a continued period of psychological strain, the result of particularly persistent or similarly weighty issues, which ensured they sought spiritual refuge not only in church, but in personal

---

63 J.G. Fraser, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion* (1922; London, 1994). Fraser described sympathetic magic as involving two branches - namely, the Law of Similarity, and the Law of Contact. ‘The magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it: the second infers that whatever he does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not’. p.11.
invocation. In the same way as the house in Wetherden witnessed no hacking of its bresummer, so the Bolnhurst bresummer remained exposed throughout the early modern period, a time when such over-plastering was a fashion visited upon many houses in the sample.66

Despite the temptation to coerce the evidence to fit the sub-headings, there are inevitably those examples which do not comfortably conform. Within halls and parlours there are burns in locations other than on the bresummer. However, it is argued that the relative degree of privacy ensured that, whichever specific ill was being plotted against, and whichever particular message was being expressed, the impact on witnesses remained similar.

In other properties it appears that a distinct symmetricality appealed to the aesthetic mores of the applicant. At 135 High Street in Cottenham a very deep series of burns were created in a single location in the centre of the bresummer in the parlour, over an inglenook, which was later sealed up by brick. The aesthetic continued however, as the two semi-circular headed recesses in the brickwork were arranged symmetrically about the opening, constructed at a date long after the period when niches were first employed to accommodate the accoutrements from the Catholic Church.

Plates 56a and 56b showing the symmetry and the excessively deep burn, located centrally on the beam. The Georgian brickwork post-dates the bresummer. 135 High Street, Cottenham.

66 T. Easton, ‘The internal decorative treatment of brick in sixteenth and seventeenth century Suffolk’, *Post Medieval Archaeology*, 20 (1986), pp.22-28. It is interesting to note Easton considered the date range for such applications to be c.1530-1650, which coincides with the period that Dean considered witnessed the application of burns. Further research on this chronology and the reasons for the application of plaster is therefore required.
Illustration 14 shows the three cell planform with rear service wing of similar date, and the location of the central taper burn. 135 High Street, Cottenham.

The carbon crust which had developed on the burnt timber had been cut out and the flame reapplied many times in order to achieve the depth illustrated. However, at no time did the applicant consider the efficacy of applying a taper to another location on the same bresummer, or any other member, including window and door frames.\(^{67}\) The applied moulding located above the bresummer features a knot hole in a position immediately above the burn, clearly chosen to reinforce the aesthetic and reflective of the sensibilities of the applicant, who may have considered the visual appeal reinforced the significance of meaning in a similar way that the aesthetics of church amplified the importance of the connection between the laity and God.

From Catholic to Protestant

It is relevant to note how Duffy described a ‘devotional underground of dubiously orthodox religion in which the dividing line between prayer and magic is not always clear’.\(^ {68}\) What is clear however is that the Reformation, by limiting the authority of the priest simultaneously raised the authority of the heads of households as intermediaries between the state and their own families no less than between the head of the household and God.\(^ {69}\) After the first official doctrinal formulary known as the Ten Articles had been produced, a mixture of traditional beliefs and particular customs and ceremonies had been retained, in combination with Lutheran ideas, though their meanings had been

\(^{67}\) An analysis of all existing timbers – of which many were original to the property – resulted in the discovery of no other burns.

\(^{68}\) Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p.278.

given a suitably Protestant spin. The symbolism of candles was woven into this raft of Articles. Those used in Candlemas, which remained in the Church calendar were henceforth employed, no longer as a protection against evil but, crucially, in memory of Christ, the divine light. Consequently, and fundamentally in regard to this research domestic, ritual application of fire for many Protestants became as valid a means of expression as it had been for Catholics. As if lighting their spiritual way in unchartered territory, it appears the continuingly indistinct nature of official religion may have left the door of the hall sufficiently ajar for each applicant and witness to apply his or her own meaning to the ritual of burning tapers.

A.G. Pearson emphasized the difference between personal and private piety. He considered personal piety a form of religious practice in which the applicant sought to encounter Mary or Christ directly, without the involvement of the clergy, who were effectively an obstruction to communication in Protestant orthodoxy. Private piety referred to sacred practice exercised in seclusion, separate from everyone. In the instance of the parlour and hall, the degree of privacy was a function of the degree of enclosure, which in many instances enabled the application of taper burns to be at once acts of piety both personal and private.

However, whilst the study sample features a majority of properties with rooms other than simply hall and parlour, several were constructed for the lower sorts, below the status of yeomen and gentlemen, in which occupants might not have entertained influential members of the Church, nor have had sufficient space for any form of social segregation. Nevertheless, as Duffy asserted there was a ‘remarkable degree of religious and imaginative homogeneity across the social spectrum, a shared repertoire of’

---

70 D. Cressy and L.A. Ferrell, Religion and Society in Early Modern England: A Sourcebook (1996: London, 2005), p.19; Hughes and Larkin (eds), Tudor Royal Proclamations I., pp.273, 274. The proclamation entitled: ‘Prohibiting unlicensed printing of scripture, exiling Anabaptists, depriving married clergy, removing St. Thomas a Becket from calendar’ sought to retain ‘setting up lights before the Corpus Christi’ and ‘bearing candles upon the day of the purification of Our Lady’. November 16, 1538. However, three months later, a proclamation entitled: ‘Prescribing rites and ceremonies, pardoning Anabaptists’ sought to ensure that the retained rites should be enacted ‘without superstition’. p.278.
symbols, prayers and beliefs which...bridged...the gulf between the literate and the illiterate’.73

By acting as a vehicle to express belief these motifs help to illustrate the nuanced relationship between the applicant and others within and beyond the home. Rapoport considered meaning crucial, and stated that variability and subjectivity ‘leads to the inescapable conclusion that all stimuli are mediated via “symbolic”’ interpretation; that is, they depend on their meaning, so that meaning becomes a most important variable in our understanding of the environment’.74 No doubt the spaces within the early modern home changed meaning as their use developed, and as personal belief - and ritual - gradually evolved from Catholic to Protestant.

Witches and the Devil

Witches had plagued the people of the continent for centuries and, while there was a relatively limited degree of perceived harm caused by them in England in the later medieval period, it was during the last years of the sixteenth century and much of the seventeenth century that the country became gripped by the various witch trials, and in the east of England attention was brought by various people including members of the University of Cambridge. Henry Holland from Magdalen College tried to show that Satan was linked to all forms of witchcraft in 1590.75 Seven years later King James VI of Scotland wrote a treatise entitled Daemonologie, the thrust of which concerned the ubiquitous nature of witches, ‘the slaves of the devil’ and their attendant familiars.76 James had grown up in the tradition of witches in Scotland and was personally involved in the North Berwick witch trials of 1590. On his ascendancy to the English throne in 1603, the timely re-release of his book served to heighten the general awareness. Perhaps in answer to Holland’s entreaties, the Act of 1604, which required a greater burden of proof in order to try a witch, also required evidence of the mark of the beast,

73 Hill, Society and Puritanism, p.3.
76 James I, Daemonologie (1597; Gloucester, 2008), p. preface.
illustrative of the coalescence of the two individual forms of evil into one demonic creature.77

King James wrote ‘for some of them sayeth, that being transformed in the likenesse of a little beast or foule, they will come and pearce through whatsoever house or church, though all ordinarie passages be closed, by whatsoever open, the aire may enter in at’.78 Several examples of burns on window and door frames have been discovered which appear to support Lloyd’s theory of sympathetic magic to prevent ingress of witches and Easton’s theory of the consequent creation of fire, both theoretically in reaction to King James’ observations, as illustrated further on.

The seventeenth-century poet Barnabe Googe wrote:

‘Whose candell burneth cleere and bright a wondrous force and might,
Doth in these candells lie, which, if at any time they light,
They sure believe that neither storm nor tempest dare abide,
Nor thunder in the skies be hear, nor any divil spide,
Nor fearful sprites that walk by night, nor hurt by frost nor haile…’79

However, illustrative of the fickle nature of belief, and the uses to which the definitions of superstition and religion might conveniently be applied, the occurrence of thunder during King Charles II’s coronation was, happily, herald of positive news rather than negative. ‘Heavens we thank you that you thundred so!...The world must burn, but – Tis with Charles, his love’.80

---

78 James I, Daemonologie, p.31.
79 B. Googe, in R.T. Hampson, Medii Aevi Kalendarium I or Dates, Charters and Customs of the Middle Ages (London, 1841), p.56.
80 H. Bold, On the Thunder Happening After the Solemnity of the Coronation of Charles II On St. George’s Day, 1661 (London, 1661). Appended in volume 16 of Bold’s poetic celebration is ‘St. George’s Day, Sacred to the Coronation of His Most Excellent Majesty Charles II’.
Small Burns

A notable aspect of burns concerns their physical proportions, their spatial arrangement on the host timber and their proximity to others. The range of marking is broad, though there are concentrations of diminutive, perhaps even tentative burns in certain dwellings, and in others significant, deep and continually reapplied burns, a focus of major physical and metaphysical activity. There are also several examples of less than 20mm tall, discovered alongside other, more substantial burns, as if forming parts of a wider message.

A central theory of my research, until recently unconsidered by historians or archaeologists, though lately supported by Dean,81 concerns the size and depth of burn proportionate to the significance of the issue being addressed, and the intended resilience or duration of the protection. As an example, the unearthly creaking of timbers may have caused a fearful reaction in a child, which may have been calmed by the ritual marking of the fireplace. The marks may equally have been applied by a child, their size reflective of the stature of the individual and/or the importance of the issue.

In support of the general theory of the ritual use of domestic candles, and the specific theory of sacred hierarchy, Robert Scribner stated that in Germany male householders purchased large candles, whilst females bought slim tapers and boys, small penny candles. Significantly, he stated that some of these were used in the home for devotional purposes. The largest candle represented Christ as the Light of the World, and was lit at the deathbed, ‘while penny candles were lit for family devotions at All Saints’ or during Advent. They were also used as a form of protective magic’.82

Other means of expressing a sacred order in the everyday world were beyond the spiritual abilities of the Church, and had therefore developed idiosyncratically as a ‘kind of do-it-yourself means of access to sacred power’.83

81 Email from with John Dean, June 19, 2013.
83 Ibid., p. 7.
Plate 57 illustrates three burns less than 15mm tall, and adjacent to one of approximately 30mm, which may have been created prior to the small burns, and then re-burned by the carpenter on several occasions, prior to its installation. The chronology is supported by the fact that the brickwork piers are original, which implies the bresummer has not sunk and been propped, which suggests the largest, angled burn pre-dates the smaller, vertical ones. 11 and 12 The Causeway, Godmanchester.

In the field of archaeology research has illustrated how parallels might exist between the physical proportions of an item and its relative meaning or scale of significance. Alexandra Knox observed how archaeologists have recently begun to consider the possibility that beliefs were not expressed merely through unfamiliar ritual practices. She analysed the burial of domestic objects from the seventh to ninth century, including domestic knives. The ‘human-thing connection’ was considered a mutual and inter-dependent relationship. She quoted from Heinrich Harke’s work in which an analysis was made of the finds at Bloodmoor Hill in Carlton Colville in Suffolk where he found a relationship between the length of a knife’s blade and the age and sex – and perhaps therefore the status - of the owner. In furtherance of this analogy, she also acknowledged Naomi Sykes’ research in which knives, due to their role in cutting and sharing, held an iconic position in the redistribution process.

An understanding of ritual action in the archaeological record continues to develop, and in amplification of the views of Barley, Pearson and Johnson et al, Knox also considered aspects of life such as settlement patterns, building orientation and the curation of artefacts to have related directly to the perspective of a group, and that an

inclusive, multi-layered approach was essential in the examination of belief systems in archaeological study.87

The Average Burn

In my research the majority of burns are between approximately 35mm and 50mm in height. Their frequency and distribution is broad, and their character generally confident. As witnessed in Bolnhurst, frenetic ritual activity was experienced predominantly in the semi-private rooms, though also in chambers and the occasional outbuilding, as described by Easton and witnessed in Home Farm in Fen Ditton.88

Further examples of frenetic markings were found on the wall plate of the farmhouse in Kirtling which illustrate the concerted effort of repeating the act, no doubt itself of ritual significance, and in so doing reaffirming a psychological state.89 Their location, immediately underneath the original thatched roof would have risked causing a fire, had they been carried out under cover. Such examples are considered by Easton to represent the carpenter’s attempt at sympathetic magic – again, for the protection of the fabric against witchcraft and fire - executed in the framing shop where draughts created the flickering tail of the burn.90 Those seen in the detached kitchen of the early Renaissance farmhouse in Fen Ditton may represent ritual activity before re-use of the timber in the eighteenth century. Since the farmhouse itself was not heavily modified after the early modern period, it is plausible that this beam would have been used in a previous detached kitchen wing, where ritual activity was tolerated. However, Dean stated that there was no evidence that the practice was secretive.91 It is pertinent to reflect on the fact that in the first chapter on woodcarving this property was found to contain no other burns, though its tenants, who had discovered a new spirituality in the emerging Renaissance, masked much of the timber frame in decorative moulding and plaster.

---

88 During his talk at Brandeston village hall on March 1, 2013 Easton discussed finding apotropaic marks, including taper burns, on cattle sheds in Suffolk.
89 Dean and Hill have witnessed many of these groups of erratic burns but currently offer no suggestions as to their provenance. ‘Burn marks research project: key findings’, Vernacular Architecture Group Newsletter, 62 (January, 2012), pp.35-42.
90 As explained by Easton during the meeting at Brandeston village hall.
91 Dean and Hill, ‘Burn marks research project’, pp.35-42.
The relationship of individual burns to each other appear as the characters of a long lost language, their relationship as individual as fingerprints, and whilst there is no suggestion here of an encrypted message being imparted, their proximity and varied size raises questions concerning their individual meanings. Their original significance was understood perhaps only in reference to their specific context and by the members of the household.

The occasional contact made by a burn with the plaster above the timber is entirely conscious and arguably reflects the desire not only to protect the timber framing from further burning in an unusual approach to the employment of sympathetic magic, but might be indicative of a desire to protect other timber elements of the house from burning, such as furniture, bedding and ornaments.
Windows and Doors

Plates 60, 61 and 62 showing burns adjacent to upstairs windows in Newnham Farmhouse in Burwell; Manor House, Church Road, Battisford; and 85 High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck.

When at the turn of the seventeenth century King James expressed his view that evil could enter a dwelling through draughty windows and doors, it is suggestive from various burns in the study area that their application was in reaction to this belief, and is therefore perhaps more likely to have been exercised by a Protestant applicant, fervent in his support of the king and his religion, than a Catholic, bound by his own rituals and beliefs.

In an example from Godmanchester, 13 individual burns adorn the bressumer in the hall, and a further handful mark previous and existing studs on the first floor. There are several intriguing possibilities in this property. The first is that historic door openings on both ground and first floors were created to access the neighbouring property, reflective of a familial relationship between householders. However, whilst such a relationship might have been shared, the degree of reliance on village lore, or of the concern for witches, was not. In the dwelling with 13 burns, five incomplete daisy wheels are also displayed on the underside of the spine beam with one very small, attenuated example on the bressumer adjacent to a selection of burns, (illustrated in the following chapter on graffiti), and a conjoined ‘V’ on the same beam. The neighbouring property, which exhibits a similarly large proportion of original framing members, and was erected at the same time as the other half of the pair, features neither burns nor graffiti. Reinforcing the intrigue is the location of a burn on the first floor door frame between the two properties, a protection from witches and perhaps for those who exited the ‘safe’ house and entered the unprotected one.
The second intrigue concerns the religiosity of the occupants of the heavily marked property. It would appear that whilst one half of the relationship may have been from the ambivalent middle, and employed practices with a more Protestant genealogy, as evidenced by burns on both door and window frames, so the other half, possibly less fervent in their belief, studiously avoided any such invocation.

Spiritual Frequency

I have coined the term ‘Spiritual frequency’ to describe a new theory which has evolved in response to some of the findings in this research. I define it as: ‘The conscious application and distribution of particular marks within a property, intended to generate a spatial tension for the purposes of protection or closeness to God’. A precise arrangement and concentration of amulets, and the timely thoughts and actions of an advocate, resulted in a metaphysical nexus which occasioned heightened physical and spiritual protection. Individuals sometimes adopted a suite of different marks to serve this purpose, and in this specific regard I have described it as a ‘composite talisman’. It is discussed further in the following chapter.

However, in the current chapter spiritual frequency refers to an example of protection of a screens passage – and therefore access into the very heart of the home. Manor House, Battisford in Suffolk contains a handful of heavily scored burns located on a timber stud on both the east and west facades, in the first floor chamber directly above the previous screens passage. On the western elevation they frame a late medieval stave window, however on the opposing side the original opening has since been obscured, though the burns remain on the frame. In a property which has several other, almost incidental burns, and none in such a concentrated arrangement, the practice of creating a spiritual frequency at this point served to protect the dwelling from the entry of evil. This approach to psychological fortification resonates particularly with a similar method adopted at Baldwin Manor in Swaffham Prior, described later, in the chapter on concealment.
Conclusion

In this chapter I have proposed and explored reasons why taper burns were applied to the fabric of the home, and how the number of individual occurrences in a property related to the applicant with distinct – and less distinct – religious affiliations, in a ritual adopted and adapted over several generations.

Francis Dickinson noted that in the Candlemas ritual, the first of the original five prayers for blessing attributed apotropaic power to the blessed wax, requesting that wherever it be lit, ‘the devil may flee away….and never presume again to disquiet your servants’. \(^{92}\) As we have seen, individuals who took blessed candles home with them from the ceremony did so for disreputable purposes, according to Parker, one of which

was to light them during thunderstorms or in times of sickness. As Duffy stated ‘The blessing of these sacramentals….put into lay control powerful spiritual weapons’.93

Thomas quoted from a vaguely termed ‘Puritan document in 1584’ that ‘‘Three parts at least of the people’ were ‘wedded to their old superstition still’”, though arguably this may have been exaggerated for polemical purposes. While this was not a reference to formal recusancy it was, however, a reminder that devotional attitudes of medieval Catholicism continued well into the early modern, Protestant era.94

Such attitudes were well expressed in the case of Wetherden in Suffolk, where the retention of the heraldic shields of both Catholic and Protestant dignitaries over the fireplace suggested an affiliation with the Dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk, irrespective of their particular religious connections. It is interesting to note that the Lord of the Manor in which this property was located was Sir John Sulyard, a Catholic lawyer and MP for Ipswich between 1553 and 1555.95 The burns in this instance, whether reflective of Catholic ritual or not, mirror the broader picture developing within the research that during times of inner spiritual turmoil, and outer religious disorder, the ritual application of motifs articulated myriad beliefs.

The Elizabethan Bishop Cooper observed that ‘that which we call fortune is nothing but the hand of God, working for causes and by causes that we know not. Chance or fortune are gods devised by man’.96 This suggests not only that the application of burns to invoke a form of assistance was a combination of religious theory and practice, but it was also arguably contrary to the teachings of contemporary theologians. Calvin pointed out that ‘the perils of daily existence would have made life intolerable for men who believed that everything happened by chance’,97 which begs philosophical and evidential questions: did people not wish to accept God’s providential judgement? Was

93 Ibid., pp.16, 282.
94 Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p.84; The Seconde Part of a Register, I, p.284.
95 http://www.Historyofparliamentonline.org Accessed October 25, 2013. Sulyard was sixth in a list of English knights who remained firm in their Catholicism in 1574, ‘but he seems to have caused no trouble to the government’.
96 T. Cooper, Certaine Sermons (no place, 1580), p.164.
97 Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic, p.94.
God unreliable, and were they taking chances which only personal invocation could assist with?

Table 3 shows the total number of burns in each property, along the vertical axis, and the distance in metres of each dwelling from its parish church, along the horizontal axis. The dotted line shows the linear forecast.

Whilst seemingly random in their distribution, it is relevant to note that 14 houses - a notable minority in the study area - do not feature any visible burns, despite many being fully framed, whilst the houses located furthest from the church exhibit the highest quantity (excepting the example which features 48 burns and is situated within 30 metres of the church). There are eight properties positioned between 75m and 400m which display between one and five burns.

There is a further anomaly in the case of 20 High Street in Burwell, situated immediately opposite the church, where there is reason to believe the bresummer which features 19 burns was imported. As far as the parameters of this research extend it is a unique example because it is softwood, rather than hardwood. The opposing bresummer in this property is decorated, in a fashion rarely seen in Cambridgeshire. Certainly, the Royal Commission considers it to have been reused, possibly from Suffolk where there are similar examples. This rare combination of two unexpected beams suggests a dwelling erected with second hand timbers from far afield.

---

98 In a written question to the Vernacular Architecture Group Newsletter, 63 (June, 2012), p.43 concerning the incidence of softwood lintels in early modern houses and the readership’s experience of the same, there were no replies. This need not necessarily indicate the rarity of use of this sort of timber, but might simply point to a lack of interest of VAG members in my line of questioning.
Nevertheless, the implication of a pattern illustrated by the linear forecast appears to suggest a reliance on the parish church for spiritual support - and the further away a property from church stood, the greater became the requirement for additional spiritual support. Whilst the current data is statistically insignificant, and requiring substantially greater supporting evidence, the evidence raises questions, and opens the way for an in-depth analysis of the relationship.

Overarching this theory however, and the concept which weaves through the chapter, is the frequency of application of burns by those adherents to Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as the uncountable middle, including the disinterested, the recusants and the church papists.\(^9\) It is a major contention of my research that those with little interest in state religion expressed themselves least in terms of their application of taper burns, and evidence of infrequent, or singular burns indicates a response to the fear of witches. Those with an increasing interest applied more burns accordingly, culminating in the application of numerous marks by committed Catholics, wedded to the old practices and interpreting and evolving their rituals idiosyncratically. The fact that the average dwelling produced no more than a handful of burns, and was probably therefore occupied by the uncountable middle, is offered a degree of support by Thomas, whose reference to the ‘Puritan document’ reminds us that, despite a reduction in the number of Catholics, according to some historians, devotional attitudes of the Middle Ages lingered well into the seventeenth century.

My second fundamental theory, and one new to architectural history, is that of spiritual frequency which, alongside the theory above, drives the research. The home was a battleground in which evil was held in abeyance, partly through the employment of various ritually motivated expressions, probably in combination with a range of verbal invocations while its other, equally significant aspect sought a constant closeness with Mary or God.

In addition, the physical dimensions of a burn, and its spatial relationship to others, was the result of idiosyncratic practice, through generations of worshippers, affected by

\(^9\) The ‘total’ figure relates to those found discovered on extant and exposed timbers, and must be considered in light of occasionally incomplete evidence.
myriad external influences. Dean’s view that burns reflected Catholic practice is of value, but because distribution was not analysed, it has not gone far enough. Easton’s view is similarly valuable, but its conclusions were constrained. He ignored the view that state religion either informed, or had any influence over, this particular form of activity. He did not discuss the history of the Church in his assessment of taper burns to justify the view that they were generated in response to the fear of witchcraft and fire, a theory which probably describes their use in particular circumstances, but was not the reason for such broad adoption.

This assessment, with its acknowledged limitations, nevertheless ventures into an area otherwise unchartered, in which it is suggested that those with Catholic sympathies expressed themselves in a tried and trusted manner to a greater extent through the use of taper burns than Protestants, whose applications were generally more tentative.

In regard to the analogy of the voice, a transitional state suggests that some of what the applicant had to express was considered acceptable for general Catholic and Protestant consumption, though other elements of any communication were more cautious, less generally welcomed, and perhaps only intended for family, who continued to seek assistance in the traditional, pre-Christian ways.

100 As explained during a talk by Timothy Easton, held at Brandeston village hall, March 12, 2013.
4 INTROVERSION

Graffiti

This fourth chapter will show how graffiti was employed principally as a vehicle to generate a spiritual oneness between the applicant and God, for the expression and reinforcement of faith and as a call for spiritual assistance. It also explains a new theory in which conjoined letters sought a similar connection.

It is the first of two chapters which see the individual move from the transitionary stage into the most secretive aspect of ritual activity, in which applications were undertaken predominantly in solitude, and were intended only for a very limited range of people. In terms of the vocal metaphor the action is whispered, in order to amplify the quality and sanctity of connection being made.

In a very limited historiography, Timothy Easton is the acknowledged authority on apotropaic graffiti on timber.1 Over more than 40 years his analysis has concluded that graffiti largely spanned the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. He considered that in residential property protective marks were usually made by craftsmen during fabrication of components, while other marks, equally visible but more casually made, were created by householders. He also believed that the Virgin Mary, the crucifix and the sun were all commonly symbolised by scratches in wood and plaster. Marian symbols are a major group of graffiti and tend to be represented by the letters ‘M’ and ‘R’, representative of Mary and Regina. ‘W’ is considered to be a pair of conjoined ‘V’s, representative of Virgo Virginum, the Virgin of Virgins. The other letter found frequently is ‘P’ which is considered either to have represented Puella (Latin for ‘girl’) - and is on occasion added after the name of a saint – or Pace (Peace) - or that it represented part of the Chi-Rho, an early symbol of Christ. Markings can be found in groups of three, representing the Trinity.

The daisy wheel could also be read as a Trinity sign. In England its official use was phased out during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries though it continued in secular

---

ritual use, and to reinforce this observation, Violet Pritchard illustrated an example of a daisy wheel with a clothed head peeping over its top, which she considered probably dated to no later than the fourteenth century, and was possibly dedicatory.

Easton’s work illustrated the proliferation of this form of marking in old houses and Juliet Fleming contended that the application of graffiti was as common in dwellings as it was in churches. In regard to Thomas Tusser’s sixteenth-century book she stated that the poems he described evidenced the fact that Elizabethan residents were permitted, even encouraged, to write on their own walls, and she noted the inherent paradox in its creation that graffiti with a juvenile or primitive character actually allowed it to function as a vehicle for intuitive forces.

The Research

This chapter considers a variety of marks inscribed in timber or stone, both in semi-public rooms and private chambers, potentially created both by builders and residents. There are 10 dwellings in the study area which contain these forms of marking, six of which have been analysed here, though other examples from outside the area have been considered to contextualise the evidence. While the application of taper burns is seen as an active, sometimes repetitious and relatively open method for invoking other-worldly assistance, the single application of diminutive, and sometimes private forms of graffiti was a method of communication which created a standing dialogue between individuals and the world beyond, amplified when an individual approached the site of the marking. The languages adopted by the applicants remain unknown, though early modern habitus implies a comprehensive degree of understanding between applicants and witnesses. Ferdinand de Saussure regarded the study of linguistic systems both audible and

---

2 Ibid., p.7.
6 Ibid., p.40.
otherwise as coalescing to form part of a universal discipline of signs known as semiology,\(^8\) of which this practice forms a part.

**Crucifix**

The most obvious symbol of traditional Catholicism is the cross.

![Plate 64. The Cross at Bolebec Cottage, High Street in Swaffham Bulbeck is 15mm long.](image)

While churches proudly exhibited the crucifix as a symbol of their spiritual affiliation, some religious symbols in the early modern period were reduced dramatically in size and thus, their visual significance. So it is with this tiny cross in Bolebec Cottage in Swaffham Bulbeck, which lay undiscovered by the owners and was only brought to light during this research. The carving is located on the end of the fireplace bresummer, lying on its side as illustrated.

![Illustration 16 shows the remains of the three bay parlour wing and the reconstructed northern wing. The crucifix is circled. Bolebec Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck.](image)

There are two possibilities regarding the reason behind its reclining form. The first option concerns the inadvertent placement of the beam during construction at 90 degrees from that intended, though this is doubtful given the traditional proportions of the bresummer which features a prominent façade and a steeply chamfered rear edge, which helps with the orientation during construction. The second possibility concerns the applicant’s name which might have begun with the letter ‘H’. The applicant may have realised, through the first carving, potentially that at the top of the photograph, that by extending the horizontal element, a recognisable cross was created. Whilst each of these possibilities is speculative, there is corroborative evidence to suggest that the second option of conjoining forms to create a visual and spiritual connection between the applicant, his name and a crucifix was not unique, but may actually have represented a recognised form of spiritual expression. This evidence is considered further on.

The second issue concerns scale. Given that the carver did not wish entirely to conceal the mark, what other possibilities might exist? Certainly, as Easton noted previously, carpenters’ marks of all sorts tended to be small, perhaps to ensure the aesthetic was not compromised, but deep enough to ensure the continued, long-lasting protection of the family, the house, or indeed the carpenter. Margaret Aston believed that in the world of painting, miniature portraits could act as a vehicle for contemplation, and a secret art capable of expressing private meanings to a discrete group of individuals.9 In building on Aston’s observation, Visa Immonen considered that miniaturisation of iconographic objects or images sought to heighten their significance. He believed that by reducing the scale of devotional items a connection was forged between liturgical space, devotional acts and their associated objects, with artefacts used outside the ecclesiastical context. He cited examples of mass-produced clay figurines manufactured in Germany during the medieval period and distributed throughout Europe, which were used as domestic ornaments.10

---

In developing this theory, a possible reason for the creation of the crucifix that resonates with other examples in the research, and which helped inform my theory of spiritual frequency, is that the cross was placed specifically in this location, on the understanding that it would be in close proximity to those who passed by it. Its proportions were necessarily small in order that it be recognised solely by those in intimate contact with the house, and to reflect the intimacy of its message. Joan Stevens considered that, in regard to Jersey houses, tiny crosses were either carved before 1547, when all such symbols were eradicated, or they served merely as a form of amulet to deter the evil eye. ‘Supporters of this view go on to say that whereas the reformers violently destroyed idols in churches….they ignored miniature crosses on fireplaces because they, like all men of the world, recognised that it was necessary to the welfare of the house to have these things’.\textsuperscript{11} This carving is consciously introspective, indicative of the tone of response intended to elicit from the individual. It was an intimate voice, conversing in a liminal space as one might have conversed with Mary or God. In the earlier medieval period religious authorities believed that closeness, if not actual contact with an icon, encouraged idolatrous attitudes,\textsuperscript{12} and it is tentatively suggested that these intimate, domestic exchanges were an early modern manifestation of that closeness.

In this property, the side of the fireplace offers the only ground floor access to what may once have been the southern cross wing, which would have necessitated individuals coming into close proximity with the cross, in a similar way that the portrait carving of Henry VIII and the crucifix and taper discovered in Balsham (considered further on) forced the individual into similarly close proximity.\textsuperscript{13} This transition from one space to another, and the private exchanges that may have taken place there ensured, through metaphysical osmosis, the reinforcement of spiritual and corporal protection.

\textsuperscript{13} The portrait carving was considered in the chapter on woodcarving, and the Balsham example is discussed further on, in the current chapter.
Conjoined Letters

A similarly secretive but similarly legible form of marking, considered to be entirely associated with Catholicism, is the conjoined ‘V’. The Virgin of Virgins was one of several names ascribed to Mary and in this form was probably employed during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.14

Plates 65a, 65b and 65c showing the graffiti on the right hand side of the first floor fireplace and associated burns at 19 Greenside, Waterbeach.

The haphazard appearance of graffiti on the first floor at 19 Greenside in Waterbeach confers upon it a feeling of contemplation and an iterative process in which the graphic appears to vary - whilst the meaning, pondered by the creator during its carving, may itself have developed, in a similar way that the application of repetitive taper burns to the same piece of timber concentrated thought, and created a heavily resonant place within the home. It is intriguing to consider that neither the burns, nor the equally easily defaced stone incisions, were damaged by subsequent occupants. Had the Catholic residents, the creators of the ‘V’ s, sold the property to Protestants, might not the fragile inscriptions have been at least partially defaced? There is no evidence even of an application of plasterwork to cover these jambs, despite the timber bresummer having been plastered at a later date. This resonates with the previous example from Wetherden in which heraldic arms and taper burns dwelt amicably side by side for centuries, irrespective of their differing religious meanings and provenance, perhaps suggestive of a general respect for domestic spirituality, or because they might have held no significance for their later viewers.

The letters ‘W’ and ‘H’ may conveniently have been the initials of the applicant, happily combining the double ‘V’ in spiritual intimacy. This would have conferred on the graffiti an intimate associative reference, suggestive of the close proximity of the Virgin. Similarly, the nearness of the individual markings to each other, the act of their creation and their permanence within the chamber, where the householder may have read his Bible, would have generated a frequency which aided the occupants and amplified their piety through their prayers.

There are several issues that the analysis of this graffiti raises and the notable parallels with the application of tapers. This house is of two phases, according to the architectural historian Mac Dowdy. The first floor was created with the erection of the central chimney and associated fireplaces in the sixteenth century, after several generations had used the property as an open hall. It is interesting to note the use of stone jambs on the first floor, as well as the application of graffiti, avoided in the fireplaces in the hall and parlour. Taper burns are present on the imported parlour bresummer but, there are notably more on the first floor. As with the crucifix in Swaffham Bulbeck so subtly located, these markings were only applied in the privacy of the bed chamber. A decision was clearly taken that the creation of these marks was most suited to the private chamber, perhaps at the time immediately following construction of the fireplace, which featured stone jambs, possibly in anticipation of such invocation, where no-one except the householder, his wife and a servant might visit.

In Ely Cathedral, possibly also during the sixteenth or early seventeenth century, an individual carved a similar form of conjoined ‘V’ into the masonry, at the eastern end. This is the third such example of conjoined letters in the research, and is suggestive of an act broadly recognised.

---

15 During discussions with the owner he explained that the architectural historian Dowdy considered the house to have been an open hall, before the fireplaces, featuring both new and reused timbers, were installed in the later sixteenth century. April 11, 2012.
Plate 66. Less than 20mm tall, this graffito is situated at the east end of Ely Cathedral. It probably dates to the mid seventeenth century.16

The appended letter ‘E’ may symbolise the surname of the applicant in a way less visually satisfying, but more instructive for historians, than the potential ambivalence of the crucifix. In locating the carving at the eastern end of the cathedral in close proximity to the Lady Chapel, and in the conjoining of the letters, the applicant’s intention seemed to be closeness to Mary, in order to receive her protection for eternity.

The letter ‘M’, and the conjoined ‘V’s are in these examples considered icons. Various modern scholars have shown that the icon was both a powerful image in itself and a source of great power as it represented God’s presence in humanity and created the connection between the spiritual and human worlds. Through the icon, the metaphysical and physical were combined,17 reiterating the links forged in the preceding paragraphs and through the creation of a trinity of applicant, activity and icon.

Marian references were found in various locations and those discovered in Anglesey Abbey in Lode reflect the intimate, introspective activity accompanying the creation of unique motifs. On the western elevation of the medieval part of the Abbey is found a concentration of graffiti on the stone window mullions. It is perhaps fanciful to consider the geometrical pattern created by reflecting the letter ‘W’ was carved to reflect a mirror, though it is a fact that they imitate the form of diamond-shaped quarries in the windows surrounding the graffiti. Another fact, of major significance, is that until its nineteenth century demolition, the Abbey church was situated immediately outside these windows.

16 See Appendix 7 for evidence of dated graffiti in Ely Cathedral.
Plates 67a and 67b. Found on the stone mullions overlooking the Abbey church at Anglesey Abbey, Lode.

It is impossible to tell whether the two were executed in the same hand though the horizontal axes on both examples slope down towards the right; and there are no other similarly distinctive carved letters in any other building so far analysed in the study area. While these conjoined ‘V’s are less well articulated than those letters in Waterbeach, they are equally representative of Mary. The inter-visibility between the applicant, Anglesey Abbey church and the graffiti is broadly reflective of the taut spatial relationship seen elsewhere, and would have been symbolic in similar ways.

In the layers of meaning generated and reinforced between physical and spiritual activity, a relevant analogy concerning a wider spatial proximity pertains to the relationship between a lord, his manor house and the parish church. The patron of the manor traditionally bequeathed the land for the church, ensuring its immediacy not only to illustrate his power and religiosity, but to guarantee that he was covered by the protective sound of its bells.18 Indeed, as Thomas Lambert stated, certain churches actually offered spatial protection and sanctuary for the spirit.19


While the etchings in the Abbey are on both ground and first floor mullions, the rooms would nevertheless have been quiet and relatively private. The intimacy which creating these delicate symbols generated amplified the solitude and the concentration necessary to execute them in a visually satisfying way, similar to the spiritual solitude involved in creating a taper burn. The possibility that prayers were recited during the activity is entirely feasible.

Daisy Wheel

The daisy wheel or hexafoil was employed on Roman altars adjacent to Hadrian’s Wall, and was a symbol sanctioned and used by the Catholic Church until the fifteenth century, after which time it seems to have been phased out of ecclesiastical use.\textsuperscript{20} In Denny Abbey in Waterbeach a 150mm diameter lead disc was discovered on the abdomen of a burial from the thirteenth century when the Knights Templar owned the property. The practice of placing a cross on the breast of the dead was well established from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, though Ian Goodall and Patricia Christie stated that this was an unusual piece, with no known parallels.\textsuperscript{21}

Plate 68. The attenuated cross, similar in appearance to the small daisy wheel found in Godmanchester.

More recently, Robert Meeson proposed the origins of the daisy wheel as a carpenters’ mark, but concluded that the conventional view offered a ritual meaning.\textsuperscript{22}

The clear parallel with the adoption in the domestic sphere of previously Church-sanctioned images, or objects is the purchase and domestic use of candlesticks and other


\textsuperscript{22} R. Meeson, ‘Ritual marks and graffiti: curiosities or meaningful symbols’? Vernacular Architecture, 36 (2005), pp.41-48.
church goods which came to be located in the hall, parlour and kitchen. The laity continued to require the support offered by items which embodied Catholicism, and so they introduced them into their private spaces and arranged them in a way that showcased their qualities, and in so doing continued the tradition of liminal space, in which the sacred and profane drew near.

In this research the daisy wheel appears in the hall and parlour, rather than in the chambers above. Wheels were traditionally incised with a pair of compasses, a tool that would have been familiar not only to craftsman, but to guild members who used them in everyday activities and, ironically enough, may have employed them primarily for decorative purposes rather than ritual.23

Given the observations in regard to the cautious location of conjoined letters in Waterbeach, it would appear that the level of confidence the applicant had in his exhibition of the example illustrated below was noticeably greater, which suggests the decision was taken on the basis of its meaning and its potential influence on the range of individuals who would have experienced it.

Plate 69 showing the partial wheel on the hall bresummer at 22 High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton.

It would appear that the implicit meanings embodied within daisy wheels effectively preordained their siting in particular locations to express the religious attitudes of the applicant.

Their use in England was widespread. In Holme Cultram in the north west, a daisy wheel adorns the centre of the lintel over the front door of a dwelling, dated 1664,24 whilst in Tichborne in Hampshire a similar design decorates a kitchen fireplace.


24 N. Jennings, Clay Dabbins: Vernacular Buildings of the Solway Plain (Kendal, 2003), pp.169, 171. It is pertinent to note Jennings’ observation that the house was built over a medieval monastic infirmary cellar, though she makes no connection between the daisy wheel and its religious origins.
bresummer. The Tichborne example was overlaid in 1698 with Latin text derived from the Bible. ‘God is a spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth’ (John 4.24). The use of Latin at this date suggests it was taken from the Vulgate version of the Bible rather than the Authorised version, indicative of Catholic application. Hall suggested that this was hardly surprising, given that the village was dominated by the Catholic squire during that time.  

Clearly, making choices about the site for application of any of the motifs in this research was significant and politic. The example above has been incised on a softwood timber plank no more than 25mm thick, the bottom of which had then been cut off. Whether this occurred at the point that the timber was applied to the mantle is impossible to ascertain, but it would seem rather odd if the lower third of the wheel was sliced off prior to its application as part of a conscious scheme of alteration to the fireplace – unless the message was indicative of a householder’s curtailment of ritual activity. Notwithstanding this, it was purposefully located over the fire, and thus its message was intended to be expressed openly.

Complete daisy wheels were also discovered on bresummers. None were found in first floor chambers and so, while coincidence cannot be ruled out, it may be that the message embodied within the wheel was conferred more earnestly, carried greater spiritual resonance, or was sufficiently benign to warrant exhibition in the hall or parlour, rather than concealed in the chamber above. However, a more positive possibility involves a collective spiritual need mutually acknowledged in the presence of the wheel, and as anticipated by the householder. The sample of daisy wheels numbers 11: - three are complete examples and eight are incomplete. Those incomplete wheels derived from two dwellings, one located in Godmanchester in Cambridgeshire, and one in Metfield in Suffolk, though further photographic evidence has been obtained from a site in Belstead, also in Suffolk.

In Godmanchester five overlapping wheels of approximately 175mm diameter adorn the underside of the hall spine beam, in the same room as the smallest complete wheel,

situated on the bresummer, which is no more than 20mm in diameter (and adjacent to a variety of taper burns, as described previously).

Plates 70a and 70b. Incomplete overlapping wheels on a spine beam, and a diminutive attenuated on a bresummer, both at 11 and 12 The Causeway in Godmanchester. Note the small burn, circled. Its rounded top suggests creation before the building was draft proof – and therefore complete.

It is interesting to note that the axial spine beam was hacked, in order to accommodate plaster at a later date, but the bresummer was not. It can be seen in Plate 69b a small, tentative burn has also been created in a desire to draw close the differing forms of invocation and thus, the nuanced forms of protection available. In Metfield, three incomplete wheels were found in the hall, and in no other rooms of the property, and a variety of burns sited in differing locations on both floors.

In a parallel study of vernacular furniture daisy wheels have been found on chests, the earliest examples appearing in the sixteenth century in the Alpine countries. During the later early modern period, wheels were also found alongside other motifs including more overt Christian symbols, though they were also employed singly to cover entire doors, parts of walls or ceilings.26

Plate 71. Belstead Hall Barn ceiling, Suffolk.

26 Peesch, The Ornament in European Folk Art, p.31; Belstead Hall Barn, Belstead, Suffolk. English Heritage List Entry no. 1285906.
This playful eclecticism is perhaps illustrative of contemporary artistic design, overlaid with an understanding of spiritual symbolism and the more sober acknowledgement of Christian meaning, reflective not only of bet-hedging, but of the evolving appreciation of spirituality and its relationship with secular art, curiosity and pleasure.27

Stylized Cross

Plates 72a and 72b. This graffito is less than 15mm across and reflects the proportions and scale of the pattern on the handle of the sixteenth-century door. Both in Anglesey Abbey, Lode.

This graffito, reiterated several times on the stone mullions of the windows at Anglesey Abbey, and in close proximity to the conjoined ‘V’ s, replicates the pattern contained within the medieval door furniture leading from the hall to the corridor. The National Trust property manager Gareth Sandham stated that the door stood in its original place, within its original frame, amongst the vast majority that did not. The symbol is a miniature Marian message, sited at a liminal point within the property forcing close contact upon entry and exit from the hall. Whiting considered the marks may have represented the five wounds of Christ.28

28 In discussion with Robert Whiting, June 20, 2013.
The four outer circles of the stone carved graffito form a square of no more than 15mm diameter and, while not ubiquitous, are witnessed in other spheres of early modern life.

Plate 73. A screen print illustrating the four notes contained secretly in music written by Thomas Tresham.

In her research, Emilie Murphy uncovered music from Thomas Tresham’s house which she believed he wrote in the late sixteenth century. The words accompanying it were apparently the last spoken by an executed Catholic priest, and contained within the music are repeated groups of four notes, symbolic of the cross. This subversive message would have been carried between knowing individuals and sung between friends and family. The very act of singing, of connecting with Mary and of spreading the word, were no doubt intrinsic to their embattled faith.

So it was with the patterns on the mullions at Anglesey Abbey. They were created on a small scale in order to avoid the obvious attentions of non-adherents and, as Immonen noted, because the fashion of the day acknowledged the significance of miniaturised symbolism. Nevertheless, their message was also conveyed on a metaphysical plane. And, as with the creation of the conjoined ‘V’s, so the act of their formation would have held symbolic importance for the applicant, tying him to the image and reiterating the private act of worship.

29 E.K.M. Murphy, ‘Adoramus Te Christe: Music and post-Reformation English Catholic domestic piety, in Religion in the Household’. Papers read at the summer and winter meetings of the Ecclesiastical History Society (March, 2014); http://www.bbc.co.uk/countryfile, April 7, 2013. Tresham’s lodge is a three-dimensional essay on the number three and contributes to the discussion on the activity of the applicant, the church, and the manifestation of their belief.
A Composite Talisman

In bringing together two different manifestations, a timber-framed manor house from the later fifteenth century was also analysed. Located in Balsham, it is outside the immediate study area, but within close proximity. The individual who is likely to have paid for its construction was Thomas Sutton, The Master of the Ordinance to Queen Elizabeth I, vast land holder and shrewd businessman.30

In terms of its planform, there was previously an access between the hall and parlour of the surviving south wing, crossing the original passage, though a doorway has since been blocked. The cross passage itself allowed access through the property, therefore creating a four-way crossing. The original planform consisted of a wing to the north and south with a hall at its centre.31

The cross passage or screens passage was therefore a central conduit, located at the heart of pedestrian activity with access onto the road and consequently onto the church. The rear door frame to the passage remains in situ, but has been altered. Throughout the property the majority of historic framing members remain exposed, though only one taper burn was discovered during the research. Its location is however pertinent not only to the chapter on tapers, but also to the present chapter. It is situated on one of the two

vertical studs creating the door frame of the blocked access from the hall. On the door head of its opposite number, which previously served to access the parlour, a small stylised carving, undiscovered by the current owners, was found during the research.

Plate 74. Carved into the parlour door head of the southern wing of Nine Chimney House in Balsham.

This beautifully carved symbol, probably illustrative of a crucifix, is no more than 20mm tall. Of course, whilst it cannot be ruled out that it is a carpenters mark, it is the only carved symbol in evidence in the entire property, and given its location, its significance as a religious symbol cannot be ignored. Easton noted that crosses were added above doorways to keep a property and its occupants safe from spirits for the forthcoming year.\textsuperscript{32} The symbol is also reflective of the Catholic practice of attaching a palm cross over domestic front doors for protection, following Palm Sunday celebrations, an activity supported by and continued under Henry VIII.\textsuperscript{33} An equally pertinent anthropological observation, made in the mid twentieth century by Anthony Van Gennep, was that ‘the door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling [and] between the profane and sacred worlds in the case of the temple’.\textsuperscript{34} However, it is a fundamental tenet of my research that liminal space applied equally to the domestic sphere as to the religious, in the same way that ritual applied equally to the ecclesiastical and domestic spheres. And recently, Marianne Hem Eriksen considered the domestic door a threshold linked closely with rites of passage and a vehicle for communication with the dead.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{33} R. Hutton, \textit{Tudor Monastery Farm} (BBC2, November 14, 2013); P.L. Hughes and J.F. Larkin (eds), \textit{Tudor Royal Proclamations I. The Early Tudors (1485-1553)}, p.279. Under the Proclamation entitled: ‘Prescribing rites and ceremonies, pardoning Anabaptists’ from February 26, 1539, bearing palms remained acceptable so long as they ‘reneweth the memory of the receiving of Christ’.
\textsuperscript{34} A. V. Gennep, \textit{The Rites of Passage} (1960; London, 2004), p.20.
In this example, the employment of a single burn on one doorframe and a carved symbol on the other is remarkable, the only examples of applied motifs in the entire building. Unfortunately, the rear screens passage door, which together created a group of three entrances, has been altered to obscure any possible symbols from view. Nevertheless, it is tantalizing to consider a trinity, generating a spiritual frequency which would have produced a heightened metaphysical experience in the individual, and could have conferred upon him a transcendent solace. Van Gennep’s term ‘threshold rite’ seems pertinent. Van Gennep’s term ‘threshold rite’ seems pertinent. 36 Alan MacFarlane stated that ‘There is considerable literary evidence for the impression that people surrounded themselves with a wall of magical objects and gestures, intended to ward off evil generally, and a witch particularly’. 37 This discovery does not necessarily imply a single phase arrangement. The applicant of the second symbol, in full knowledge of the first, may have attempted to conflate two (and perhaps even three) disparate expressions and their concomitant meanings, into service in one significant location, in order to generate a place with a very notable spiritual frequency.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the adoption of graffiti, including the composite talisman, was a fundamental approach to invoking protection, one of several theoretical threads weaving through the research. The evidence is new, but builds upon Easton’s work. It illustrates that the individual actively engaged in expressing their beliefs through highlighting the conscious spatial arrangement of marks which, together with the evidence on taper burns in a previous chapter, resulted in the theory of spiritual frequency. In particular, through the analysis of conjoined letters the work furthers Easton’s research, by illustrating that graffiti was used not only to express religious affiliation or sympathy, but was applied and employed to draw the individual closer to God.

36 Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.21.
Whilst the notion of a ‘thin place’ in which the veil between Heaven and Earth is very fine is a contemporary definition based on Celtic mysticism, the fundamental concept of being in a holy place to be nearer to God, is ancient.\(^{38}\) In these examples it has been shown how the concept was employed in the domestic realm to encourage solitary prayer and to receive powerful individual protection. The act of creating and viewing a motif, the earnest prayers uttered in contemplation, and the resultant energy of the space, whether it be overlooking a church or a liminal place within the home, completed the trinity of devotion.

Their location sought to confer protection on those who came within their proximity. Their secretive nature reinforced their intimacy, and when Church orthodoxy changed, the sometime gulf between the new convention and traditional invocation was tolerated, so long as it remained behind closed doors.

There was certainly the cerebral space in early modern spiritual life for the adoption of a range of beliefs and rituals allied to Catholicism and Protestantism and to other, less definable practices since, when faced with a raft of threats, individuals were tempted to respond pragmatically at least as often as to conform to orthodox expectation. As Cameron stated ‘The late medieval literature on superstitions conjured up….an image of a European folk-culture where Christian orthodoxy did not have everything its own way’.\(^{39}\)

In terms of the vocal metaphor, these expressions were whispered, not only because they contained significant personal and potentially incriminating information, but crucially, because in the act of their creation and subsequent use, a heightened degree of intimacy was obtained.


5 INTROVERSION

Concealed Objects

In this final research chapter I will demonstrate that the practice of conscious concealment was undertaken in order to express messages whispered to their otherworldly recipients in the most secretive rooms available. Whilst Rainer Atzbach contested that much of the evidence of concealment was not ritual, but accidental or the conscious deposit of waste,¹ I argue that in the following examples there was no cause for anyone other than the applicant and perhaps his or her spouse to be aware of the intimate correspondence. Indeed, private correspondence whilst stowing an object may have served to reinforce the power of the message and the significance of the object being concealed. By virtue of the nature of the space, it is equally fair to conclude that the act would not have been carried out loudly, either metaphorically or literally. The location of this chapter, at the end of the research, reflects a resting place, the end of the journey through the house, to the place where communication was entered into with the greatest solemnity. In terms of the vocal metaphor therefore, a whisper describes the activity.

June Swann pioneered the collection and research of concealed shoes in the 1960s and wrote a ground-breaking article in 1969.² The collection, and her knowledge of the existence of other shoes, illustrated that the practice was worldwide. Some of the more recent concealments include a broad range of later Victorian shoes found in Britain, and many sorts of building have revealed such objects. She noted that every sort of person was superstitious, evidenced by the style of the receiving buildings, which ranged from small cottages to large manor houses. In her research, small cottages accounted for 42.6% of all concealments, 10.9% were from farms, 9.4% from manor houses and mansions, with a large minority of 26% found in urban buildings.³

Swann considered that the chronology of concealment was most likely to be related to major alterations or repairs carried out to the fabric of a building. Of the approximately

³ Ibid., pp.56-62.
1100 shoes that she and her colleagues had recorded (to 1995) the following highlights the rapid trajectory of concealment:

- Sixteenth century = 20
- Seventeenth century = 154
- Eighteenth century = 270
- Nineteenth century = 424.

She pointed out that in breaking down the figures to the decade, the greatest number correlated strongly with the incidence of war. The number of individual shoes in any one concealment varied too, from an individual piece of one shoe to approximately 100 examples found in a derelict house in Gelli Lago, in north Wales. In terms of their sitting, the majority were secreted in the chimney flue, or the stud wall between the chamber and the stack, though many were also discovered under floors and in ceilings. There is no evidence of a prevalence for a particular hiding place at a given time in history, though there is a distinct preference for well-worn shoes, mostly with repairs.

The Deliberately Concealed Garments Project (DCGP) was initiated in 1998 by Dinah Eastop. Like Swann, the DCGP suggested that the concealment of garments was likely to be widespread both spatially and temporally, and the reasons for their concealment probably quite diverse. There is substantial evidence of this activity in Australia, the United States and mainland Europe. Ian Evans found various artefacts throughout Australia during the course of six years, from the remains of a child’s shoe, left in the 1920s within the structure of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, to a striped prisoner’s shirt, concealed under the stairs of Hyde Park Barracks prison.

The DCGP also supported Swann’s assertion that the practice was not short lived. In an early example, evidence was uncovered in a sealed layer behind a seventeenth-century wall in a cross passage of a house in Devon and in a late example from Lincolnshire, dated to 1901, a child’s shoe was discovered with a miniature Bible contained within it, a clear indication that the relationship between magic and religion, and its idiosyncratic private expression, survived well beyond our period.

---

4 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-11400041 This concealment may not necessarily have represented ritual practice, but rather waste disposal, as propounded by Atzbach.
6 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16801512
Eastop suggested that the very lack of primary literary evidence for concealment was a fundamental aspect of the practice. She offered three possible alternative reasons as to why this might be the case. Firstly, all written evidence might simply have perished. Secondly, the depositors felt no need to record the action and thirdly, the people involved were all illiterate. These alternatives might to varying degrees be applied to some or most of the motifs in this research, but the obvious fourth possibility, that the applicants required the activity to remain secret, could equally be applied to much of my research. Conversely however, the lack of documentary proof for concealment is, in Atzbach’s view, evidence that most examples were constituted of waste, with no ritual connotation.

Nevertheless, there is agreement that at least a percentage of concealments represented something imbued with ritual significance - but why did people consciously conceal these objects within their homes? Swann considered that some of the garments were linked to foundation sacrifices and possibly, by extension, to freemasonry. Eastop suggested the thread that linked them was ritual protection, and were similarly linked to the employment of witches’ bottles, animal bones, the burying of cats and apotropaic markings.

Concurrent with my research is the website run by Brian Hoggard which looks at the incidence of, and reasons for, the concealment of shoes, witches bottles, cats, written charms and horse skulls, as well as the application of ritual marks. The earliest reference to the concealment of shoes dates from 1308 when a rector and reputed saint called John Schorn from Long Marston in Buckinghamshire (1290-1314) apparently trapped the devil in a boot. There are very few surviving shoes from this date, and

9 Atzbach, 'The concealed finds from the Muhlberg-ensemble', pp.252-280.
whether the story simply reinforces a pre-existing practice or whether it acted as a catalyst, is unclear. Nevertheless, shoes are the most commonly concealed object. One view proposed by Hoggard was that shoes were meant to trap the witch upon entering the house because, in 26% of the cases that he is aware of, they were placed on a ledge inside a chimney – which resonates with the narrative concerning witches, provided by King James in his book, *Daemonologie*,\(^\text{13}\) and with the recesses constructed to act as spirit catchers in the chimney flue in Kirtling.

Concealing bottles continued until at least the mid eighteenth century, as evidenced by an example discovered in Reigate in Surrey, which contained 9 bent pins and a liquid, and was dated to between 1700 and 1750. Hoggard suggested the commonest materials stored in bottles were iron pins, nails, human hair and urine. The secrecy involved in concealing these items appears fundamental to the ritual which, he concluded, was centred upon the protection of the home and individual from evil. Bottles and their contents were almost entirely situated under door thresholds or fireplace hearths, or were built into walls, and as such were presumed to prevent the access of witches and their familiars, again in a way reminiscent of King James’ advice.

Cats were sometimes buried in walls, under floors or in roof spaces. Hoggard stated that some writers considered they were buried to scare vermin, though their location in walling, sometimes under window sills, is perhaps not the most conducive to carrying out the task. He suggested that after death various cats were positioned to appear as if they were hunting on a celestial plane, perhaps keeping witches’ familiars at bay or, given their supposed sixth sense, harnessing their psychic ability for the benefit of the household.\(^\text{14}\)

Extant examples of written spells are very delicate and Hoggard is aware of only 20. Again, they were created to protect people and to preserve livestock from witchcraft.

developed, and various depictions of him with the devil in a boot beside him were created in the mid fifteenth century.

\(^\text{13}\) James I, *Daemonologie* (1597; Gloucester, 2008).

\(^\text{14}\) Hoggard, [http://www.apotropaios.co.uk](http://www.apotropaios.co.uk); Rainer Atzbach found a cat whose head had been cut off, and whose feet were individually nailed to the floor, in a ‘dead floor’ between the first and second storeys of a house in southern Germany. In discussion, during the ‘Buildings in society international’ conference, (Belfast, June 19-21, 2014).
Merrifield cited various examples from ancient times to the early twentieth century. The theme which links many of them, in a similar way that the five chapters of this research are linked, is the eclectic approach in which Christianity and magic are conflated, here with astrological symbols and abracadabra.\textsuperscript{15} As Thomas noted, ‘the hold of organised religion upon the people was never so complete as to leave no room for rival systems of belief’.\textsuperscript{16}

The Research

Four properties have revealed a range of concealed objects including a shoe, secreted within a flue on a first floor, a sickle, horse shoe and bottle built into the fabric of a first floor, and a secret cupboard located above the door to a first-floor chamber. However, in the final example I will show how an intriguing variety of personal everyday items, discovered recently by the present owner on the ground floor, were no less secretive in their ambition, but imbued the entire house with the qualities of a wishing well that lasted for several generations.

Swann focused primarily, but not exclusively, on shoes, and the development of the DCGP broadened the artefact collection to include other material, whilst Hoggard’s website illustrates that there are yet other items concealed. However, the evidence discovered here further supplements the range of concealments. With the enlargement of the list, it follows - perhaps a little way behind - that the range of idiosyncratic reasons for their concealment also increases.

Clothing

In Swaffham Prior a child’s shoe was discovered by a builder repairing a house several years ago. It was replaced, adjacent to the main brick chimney breast, which had been inserted in the seventeenth century, along with a shoe offered by one of the current

\textsuperscript{15} Merrifield, \textit{The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic}, pp.137-158.
residents’ children. Swann considered the intrinsic, personal nature of the shoe, or its individually moulded shape, the most significant factor in such concealments, rather than the material from which they were made. The date of the shoe is unknown but the insertion of the stack took place in the seventeenth century, and the roof was repaired in the nineteenth century, creating a window of opportunity of 200 years.

Children’s shoes make up more than half of those concealments discovered by Ian Evans in Australia and a similar proportion is reflected in studies carried out in Germany, Norway and the Netherlands. Evans considered their employment the result of either their greater apotropaic efficacy, or simply their greater number, and therefore their availability.

Baldwin Manor, High Street, Swaffham Prior

Agricultural Implements

There is little evidence of the concealment of agricultural implements across Britain, particularly in regard to their immersion in the fabric of a structure, but Swann noted the very occasional burial of a shoe in the depth of a daubed wall, and Ewart Evans observed that ‘in Cambridgeshire the witch bottle…. [was] usually discovered concealed in the wattle and daub above the lintel of the door through which the witch was most likely to enter’.

However, at an impressive late medieval timber framed farmhouse in Swaffham Prior the owners discovered a sickle and a broken bottle imbedded in a wall on the first floor above the medieval screens passage, which had been converted in the early modern period.

Illustration 18 shows the site of the concealments in first floor walls, circled red, and the taper burn by the window, circled green, which overlooked the original cross passage. Baldwin Manor, High Street, Swaffham Prior.

In a parallel wall situated over the hall, and erected to create a chamber, a horseshoe was discovered. Unfortunately (for me) both implements were reburied as part of the maintenance of the property. An interesting aspect of this concealment is the fact that immediately above or adjacent to each artefact, on the surface of the timber frame, were discovered a small collection of taper burns. Their existence might ordinarily be considered coincidental, given the possible breadth of location for such marks about the house, but in this case only three other burns were found in the entire property, again located in a cluster, this time between the sickle and the horseshoe, on a timber stud framing a rear stave window - which tentatively suggests their use either to reference a concealment or, more likely, a spiritual frequency generated between the marking of the wood with fire, the rear window, and the concealed objects.

English Heritage observed that the current staircase against which the sickle was located is a later insertion. The original stair, which they suggest would have led to a chamber over the hall, was possibly located beyond the axial stack, through a side door. So, whilst the plan form remains largely as it did in the sixteenth century, the current stair has blocked the original passage. The wall over the passage is in the centre of the house, whilst the rear window is the nearest original one to its centre and would have provided surveillance over the entrance and exit from the passage beneath. The fact that the passage lay approximately beneath the concealments suggests the ritual activity sought to overwhelm any harm that might have been visited upon the property through the exterior door, strongly reminiscent of the spatial arrangement of taper burns discovered.

---

21 English Heritage List Entry no. 1131468.
in Battisford, and of King James’ theories on the surreptitious approach of witches. The fact that these taper burns are located in very close proximity to the concealed ironwork reinforces the suggestion that the householders sought to control their unwelcome access. Both witches and fairies hated iron, which had been used as a highly effective amulet to control them, since the advent of ironworking, and in the medieval period was deposited in places considered unusually vulnerable to negative thoughts. The Jacobean poet Robert Herrick wrote a poem entitled ‘Another Charme for Stables’, in which the following couplet resonates:

‘Hang up hooks, and sheers to scare
Hence the hag that rides the mare…..’ 24

Herrick’s poem was a pithy advisory to owners of horses to suspend iron implements in proximity to horses in order to prevent them being hag-ridden. However, the obvious correlation with concealing such implements in the walls of a house, particularly over the passage through which metaphysical horses might have galloped, is apparent. And, whilst the equine activities lyrically described by Herrick may not have resounded specifically with these residents, the general understanding that iron was inherently special appears to have. Nonetheless, Steven Roud considered the antipathy towards iron by witches had never been satisfactorily explained, and he noted that a Victorian justification concerning its awe-inspiring effect upon the people, who regarded it as a sacred substance, was simply speculative. Yet, the relationship between iron and good luck is historic and strongly forged. There is reference from the fourteenth century to the luck which was brought by the chance discovery of the material. ‘Iron nails are among the lucky finds’, with such references made increasingly from the seventeenth century. The use of horseshoes above doors remained common in the mid twentieth century, particularly in rural areas and, as Ewart Evans observed, in Suffolk some

25 Roud, The Superstitions of Britain and Ireland, p.265.
27 For example: J. Mason, Anatomie of Sorcery Wherein the Wicked Impietie of Charmers, inchanters and Such Like, is Discovered and Confuted (London, 1612); T. Cooper, Mysterie of Witchcraft (London, 1617), p.137; N. Homes, Daemonologie and Theologie (London, 1650), p.60.
people built horse-trappings into the chimneys of their farmhouses for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{28}

The generally accepted date range for the creation of taper burns and the concerted attention paid to witches suggests by implication this concealment took place during the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. This was a time when residents of properties of this status continued to own and personally employ agricultural implements on the land, and gift similar items to family and friends as part of their will.\textsuperscript{29}

The wattle panels either side of the implements appear to be the original, and certainly the current owners, who carried out substantial works of repair, found it unnecessary to replace them.\textsuperscript{30} It would seem that the tapers were applied at an approximately similar period to the concealment - which would have necessitated burning the timbers in situ. The spiritual frequency generated above the hall,\textsuperscript{31} which saw the combination of artefacts in the walls with the use of fire to mark the place of their concealment, and the marking of the window frame, is a sequential application. Exact chronology is impossible to determine, and it is open to debate whether the burns were applied before the concealments, or after, to reinforce the original meaning of the concealment, perhaps following the first application at the time when the property was altered, when it was considered the original ritual had proven either ineffective or, conversely, very useful, in either case re-emphasizing the ritual in the contemporary manner, sustaining the protection. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence to illustrate the extended use of

\textsuperscript{28} Ewart Evans, The Pattern Under the Plough, p.58.

\textsuperscript{29} In M. Parker’s All My Worldly Goods, II – Wills and Probate Inventories of St Stephen’s Parish, St Albans, 1418-1700 (St Albans, 2004), there are many examples of wills of householders of the middling sort, during our period, which feature agricultural implements, including ‘necessary tools of iron relating to husbandry’, p.197. Of the 94 wills dated between 1600 and 1700 there are no mentions of sickles. There are however occasional references to ‘siths’ (scythes).

\textsuperscript{30} During local consolidation the owners came across the ironwork. The panels of mud and clay were considered sufficiently sound to be repaired locally and repainted rather than replaced.

\textsuperscript{31} During a discussion with the owner on April 10, 2012, she mentioned that Adrian Gilbert, the historian known for his work on Cressing Temple barn in Essex, visited the house and considered it a very early transition house (which saw two floors erected at the same time, rather than one overlaid by another at a later date) as in a hall house, described by N. Pevsner, The Buildings of England: Cambridgeshire, (1954; London, 1970), p.381. English Heritage appear to concur with Gilbert’s assessment that the property was originally constructed with two floors, making it significant in terms of its architectural evolution.
particular areas within properties as repositories through decades, suggestive of the transference of ritual, however nuanced, between generations.  

There is also a similarity between the relationship of symbols, spaces and activity in this property with those in Anglesey Abbey and the spatial association of marks discovered in Balsham, where the spiritual frequency was generated as an individual entered the metaphysical nexus. This triangular pattern of activity, whilst articulated idiosyncratically, nevertheless appears representative of a domestic formula expressed by Catholics during the sixteenth century, or by individuals at a later date practicing time-honoured Catholic ritual, irrespective of whether they acknowledged their spiritual origins or not.

**60 Denmark Road, Cottenham**

Secret Cupboard

Despite the discovery of post-WWII drinks bottles in a cupboard in a cottage in Cottenham the creation of the space and its location in an early seventeenth-century house is noteworthy. It is formed in the upstand above a door which leads into the roof void above the stairwell and second chamber.

Plates 75a, 75b and 75c showing the door and the void beyond.

---

Illustration 19 shows the location of the secret cupboard in the cross wing.

Not to scale

The door is approximately 125mm x 250mm in its opening dimensions and originally featured a thin leather hinge, long since worn away. The frame and door were constructed at the same time as the roof and wall as evidenced by the nature of the saw cuts, the timber sections and the fact that no post-construction marks are witnessed on the stud frame. The proposed use was therefore considered at inception, in a similar way to the niches that were constructed within masonry fireplaces. While very occasionally niches in semi-private halls featured doors and served the practical, everyday purposes of storage, a diminutive cupboard with door located above the entrance to a chamber is wholly unusual and begs questions. The property is described by English Heritage as seventeenth century.33

In considering the provenance of the cupboard, various issues are raised. It can be seen that a simple, modest dwelling such as this would have accommodated individuals whose worldly wealth would have compared unfavourably against some whose wills from a similar period included small, expensive items suitable for concealment in a small cupboard, such as jewellery, money, silver salt cellars or pewter spoons. Several hundred inventories from Cambridgeshire from the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were analysed during the course of my research, though few examples of small items precious enough to warrant an individual storage facility were found, except for purses of money which traditionally appear in inventories, *Imprimis*, and on the individual concerned.34 Purses were never listed as being in chests, cupboards or small

---

33 English Heritage List Entry no. 1331316. The description notes that the ‘cross wing is of similar date and materials’ to the main range.

34 In *All My Worldly Goods* there are many references in the seventeenth-century inventories to ‘purses’ or ‘ready money’ (pp.146, 152, 153, 155, 163, 170, etc.) but very infrequent mentions of small, valuable items such as silver spoons (pp.178, 199).
chambers, and in no other dwellings in the study area is there to be found such a cupboard.\textsuperscript{35}

The cupboard might alternatively have been considered an appropriate setting for a sequence of concealments, akin to the secret channels in several of the niches described previously. Certainly in some accumulative concealments there is a stratification of layers spanning many decades.\textsuperscript{36} It is therefore tantalizing to consider the possibility that this space was witness to a similar variety of concealments over an extended period of time. Mummified cats have been found in many roofs from the early modern era and the possibility that one such animal was placed there, following its demise, to chase rats and mice on a celestial plane, is not beyond possibility.\textsuperscript{37} Rats were renowned for their role as witches’ familiars and the constant noise and movement of animals in a thatched roof may have prompted people to anticipate these otherworldly activities when constructing their new home.

The other possibility for its use is contingent on its specific location, above the door. Both in Swaffham Bulbeck and Balsham door heads were marked by symbols to confer a degree of protection on those who passed under them, such as the palm cross. While the principle of generating a form of spiritual nexus has been discovered in this research, the particular form that each example took was quite individual.\textsuperscript{38} And as such, a variety of artefacts through a period of time may have been stored to provide a suite of protection. As a final observation it is interesting to note that whilst much of the timber framing is extant within this property, there was no evidence of taper burns or other forms of apotropaic expression, possibly because the concealments, which may have changed through time in response to varying concerns, were considered to offer a sufficient degree of protection.

\textsuperscript{35} In 15 years of assessing the fabric of old houses I have never seen, nor has any householder ever mentioned the existence of, a secret first floor cupboard.

\textsuperscript{36} Swann, ‘Shoes concealed in buildings’, pp.56-69. Swann noted that in Haddon Hall in London, layers of depositions were found which contained clothing placed in the void by the chimney over a period of more than 100 years.

\textsuperscript{37} At the guild hall in Lavenham in Suffolk a mummified cat, discovered in the roof of the hall, is currently displayed in a glass box.

\textsuperscript{38} Idiosyncrasy is fundamental to folkloric belief where individual circumstance, opportunity and experience generated a raft of nuanced responses within a broad framework of recognisable tradition in which there is no orthodoxy to prescribe and determine. As expressed for example in Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic (1971; London, 1991).
333 High Street, Cottenham

An early seventeenth-century timber-framed farmhouse is home to several unique concealments. Its owners at the time of this ritual activity were Thomas Dowsing, a relatively wealthy individual, and his family who lived in a village that offered rapacious individuals the greatest prizes.  

The evidence that cooking took place in the heart of this property is in the heavily dished surface of the parlour floor, the result of heavy traffic on clay pammetts, and the cracks and breakages caused by dropping pots and pans. Such dishing and cracks do not occur in the hall. The parlour was a busy place. In the inventories from St Albans cushions, painted cloths, wainscot, candlesticks and moulds to make candles were commonly listed in these rooms while in Norfolk, Phillip Cullyer’s inventory of 1625 included a pair of virginals, two books on martyrs, four by Calvin and a great bible, stored in a keep and shrouded by a green curtain. In 1629 Thomas Moore’s inventory included two bibles and a psalter in ‘the inside house’.

In the seventeenth century some parents even held private baptisms in these primary rooms, in co-operation with the officiating clergymen. Support for this activity came from none other than Martin Luther, who had declared in the previous century that if a pastor was unavailable to carry out the duty, then the head of the household should take it upon himself to baptize his own children. Nevertheless, it went down rather poorly with the Puritans, and at least some non-conformists, who stated that ‘The sacraments were not ordained by God to be used….as charms and sorceries’. Even the Book of

---

39 J. Ravensdale, Liable to Floods. Village Landscape on the Edge of the Fens AD.450-1850 (Cambridge, 1974), p.163; No evidence has been uncovered to relate Thomas Dowsing to the iconoclast, William Dowsing.
42 D. Cressy, Birth, Marriage and Death. Ritual, Religion and the Life Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England (Oxford, 1997), p.189; J. Canne, A Necessitie of Separation from the Church of England, Prooved by the Non-Conformist Principles (No place, 1634), p.105. In his literary debate with non-conformists, John Canne also noted that they believed that ministering the Lord’s Supper in their houses was considered repugnant and contrary to the word of God.
Common Prayer stipulated that without very good reason members of the laity must not baptise their children at home. ‘They shall warn them, that without great cause and necessity they baptise not children at home, in their houses’.\(^{43}\) In 1604 it was revised precisely to exclude baptism by the laity in any circumstance.\(^{44}\) However, it did happen. Contemporary support comes from Ralph Josselin, an Essex clergyman who baptised his own third daughter in his ‘hall chamber’ in 1654, probably at that time the finest room in his house.\(^{45}\) However, once the ritual had been performed within the home, children were not allowed to be baptized again within the church.\(^{46}\)

It is thus entirely feasible that Sarah, the third child of Thomas and Sara, was baptised in their parlour, perhaps even by Thomas himself. Atzbach supports this theory.\(^{47}\) Rapoport stated that the social situation influences individuals’ behaviour, though it is the impact of the environment around them that offers the cues for that behaviour.\(^{48}\) A short time after Sarah’s baptism her father carried out a very personal concealment, which may have formed part of the private baptism ceremony – and which remained in situ until 2012. A beautifully carved wooden button was discovered with a small handwritten note neatly wrapped around it, as if for protection. It was secreted into the soft lime mortar immediately between the bearing timber and the underside of the bresummer.


\(^{47}\) In discussion with Rainer Atzbach during the ‘Buildings in society international’ conference, (Belfast, June 19-21, 2014).

Illustration 20 shows the layout of 333 High Street, Cottenham and the location of the finds.

Plate 76 illustrating the location of the button and note.

The note was dated October 12, 1617, a Sunday, the traditional day on which baptisms were held.\(^{49}\) It is perfectly feasible that the baptism was delayed until a Sunday. Judith Maltby stated that, ‘the refusal to baptize on a weekday is often seen by historians as an indication of puritan sentiments in a minister, reflecting the desire to discourage any magical connotations that the ceremony might have left to their ‘semi-pagan’ or ‘crypto-papist congregations’.\(^{50}\) (The question of the possible alternative location of her baptism is one to which we shall return.) The note that accompanied the button clearly explains the provenance and described Dowsing as a ‘Gent’. This status is supported by the registrar in his son Thomas’ baptism record.\(^{51}\)

---

\(^{49}\) [http://www.timeanddate.com](http://www.timeanddate.com)

\(^{50}\) J. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, p.53.

\(^{51}\) The record of baptism for Mercie, 1606, Thomas, 1610 and Sarah, 1617, in which Thomas Dowsing was ascribed the titles of both ‘Mr’ and ‘Gent’. Cambridgeshire CRO, Cottenham Parish Register, 1572-1641. Spool no. 1040454.
Plate 77 shows the button and the note in which it was wrapped.

The room chosen for this concealment was not the hall, arguably the more impressive and formal space of the house, but the parlour, the more comfortable, less formal room and the hub of activity. The location of the concealment was almost as important as the act itself. The fireplace stands at the centre of domestic life and its warmth and altar-like dominance in the room created a spiritual gravitational pull to which the Dowsings found themselves drawn.

Rapoport stated that behaviour is moulded at least in part through the environment, and that material things are imbued with meaning partly through the actions of individuals programmed into them. In the current example the Dowsings’ behaviour was enabled through a combination of physical segregation and privacy, a knowledge of Christianity and the world of folk custom which resulted in a meaning personal to them, not only in regard to the act of concealment, but to its location and to the button itself. Rapoport also noted the contrast between architectural centrality and the periphery, which he considered was so marked that it was practically universal.

Whilst the evidence suggests Dowsing was not a Catholic nevertheless, as Thomas stated, the Catholic sacraments had generated a body of dependent beliefs, which gave each ceremony a specific meaning that the Church authorities had not claimed. By the early sixteenth century many of these rituals had become fundamental rites of passage,

52 Rapoport, Meaning of the Built Environment, pp. 56-60.
53 Ibid., pp.60, 111.
and there was sometimes an emphasis on physical transition. In his own way it can be seen that Dowsing employed an alternative rite to confer on his own child a similarly divine blessing. However, this research finds no evidence that Dowsing was a puritan either, and his act of concealment verged on the magical. Nevertheless, it is notable that this level of personal control within the home was indicative of domestic order, a desire some puritans had to assert domestic control.

Despite the relative paucity of Protestant home baptisms the clergyman Anthony Sparrow was concerned, several years later, that superstitions might secretly return to the ritual if they were allowed to be carried out in home despite, or perhaps in response to, various non-conformist groups having practised it for decades. Christopher Hill stated that once religious authority had broken down after 1640, the more energetic puritan householders sometimes took over the role of the ministers.

There are three possible reasons for the choice of location for Sarah’s baptism, if indeed it occurred at home. Firstly, the rector may have had an alternative, perhaps more puritanical approach to the ritual with which the Dowsings disagreed. Secondly, baptisms were sometimes undertaken at home if it was thought the child might die. However the third, more prosaic possibility relates to the reconstruction of the church tower, between 1617 and 1619, which could have forced the family to avoid the place in lieu of their own private ceremonial space.

Of course, the possibility must also be considered that the ceremony took place within church, in the normal fashion, irrespective of rectors and reconstruction, to be followed by the ritual concealment at home, which was certainly a common location for such

55 Thomas Dowsing’s will is uneventful, its form and order suggestive of Protestant tradition.
57 Cressy, Birth, Marriage and Death, pp.189, 190.
58 Hill, Society and Puritanism, p.402.
activities in later centuries. And, despite Margaret Spufford’s observation that Cottenham was radically non-conformist during the seventeenth century, the insertion of Sarah’s name in the church register indicates a traditional, at least outwardly Protestant family, though one which clearly welcomed a degree of folk custom in its ritual.

It seems appropriate to see Dowsing as morally upright and a father who took his responsibility for the ethical and religious wellbeing of his household seriously. Not only was Protestant domestic baptism rare in the period, but the act of concealment was equally uncommon. Of the 868 items that Swann had discovered, only 154 dated from the seventeenth century. And of that number only a small percentage would have been generated in its first quarter. Notwithstanding this, Dowsing was compelled to conceal the button in the new fireplace in order to commune, to request and to pray. Clearly, the domestic spirituality which pervaded this house was an aspect of life which Protestantism alone neither fashioned nor administered.

Gillian Stapleton suggested that the button came from an item of high-quality clothing, worn by a wealthy individual probably for a special occasion. She considered it quite feasible that it came from Sarah’s baptismal garment as this major rite of passage necessitated garments of the highest quality. She also suggested that the fireplace was the appropriate repository for secrets and memories, particularly as she believed, along with Atzbach, that the girl was baptized there.

The Dowsings’ first recorded child, Mercie, was born in 1606, and their only son, Thomas in 1610. Sarah arrived seven years later. Despite the query over her place of baptism, all three were recorded in the Cottenham parish register. The Dowsings had a successful time of child rearing. Each of the three siblings grew to adulthood and both the girls married. There is no evidence of Mercie’s lifespan, but Sarah and her brother lived long lives. Of course, and despite the existence of astrologers and wise women, no-one could have foreseen any of this at the point of her baptism. Nonetheless, some

---

60 Evans, ‘Touching magic’, p.143.
62 In correspondence with Gillian Stapleton. April, 2013.
influential individuals considered such forecasting possible, and based in scientific fact, let alone those less well educated who may have had greater necessity of alternative advisors. Sewn into the baptism records of the parish register for Cottenham, and located between pages from the early seventeenth century I discovered a sheet of handwritten prophecies, noting events that were to occur between the years of 1620 and 1630. Custody of the register and access to it reflected power within the parish, suggesting the author was educated and kept up with the fashions of the day. For approximately twenty years in the mid seventeenth century astrologers were influential and well-respected. However, like all fashions, it did not last. With the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, astrology slowly lost influence and was eventually discredited. Yet, forecasting in other guises remained. The astrologer William Lilly remarked in 1666 that the English employed prophecies more than people in most other nations. The fundamental reliance on looking into the future, particularly by the clergy, was not uncommon. These prophecies might therefore have implied an attempt to create a personal set of predictions, a forecast of the condition of the heavens at the time of a particular individual’s birth, such as that of Christ, whose nativity was published by the Restoration clergyman John Butler, in 1671. In Essex, Josselin mentioned that he saw a book of prodigies in 1661, which MacFarlane noted was an extraordinary item from which omens were created, though Josselin himself made no judgement on its validity or significance.

In the same way as the parish register reflected traditional Protestant orthodoxy, with a little fashionable prophesying thrown in for good measure, so the faith of the Dowsings was traditionally Protestant but, there remained room for the employment of some gentle magic. The concealment of an item of clothing which related to an activity so manifestly Christian in nature and essential to Protestant life, was not expressly supported by the Church and yet, between the pages in their collective minds there was sufficient a gap for such an approach to be acknowledged.

63 See Appendix 8.
68 MacFarlane, The Diary of Ralph Josselin, p.482.
This spiritual and material gift is somewhat reminiscent of the coin that Josselin buried, when he was planting fruit trees in his garden at a similar time.\textsuperscript{69} Josselin even noted the activity in his diary, but with no reference to its significance it can only be surmised that in committing a coin to the ground in which his trees were to grow, he was invoking the influence of another world - perhaps God’s world - to help ensure vigorous growth for both his trees and his family. After all, his garden belonged to God, and as such it was the antithesis of the wilderness, which Christopher Hill described as a ‘habitat of free-growing weeds and of natural man with no rein on his lusts’.\textsuperscript{70} The parallel between this act and that of Dowsing is clear. Dowsing committed something almost sacred into the heart of his home, to request the physical and spiritual growth of his daughter, as vigorous as the trees in Josselin’s orchard.

A practical issue relates to the style and clarity of handwriting employed in the note. There is no certainty that it was written by Thomas Dowsing. While it is accepted that his will was signed more than 30 years after the baptism note, the construction of his signature is nevertheless notably different.

Plates 78a and 78b illustrate the differences in handwriting.

The name on the note is confident, charismatic and accomplished, whilst the signature to the right is conscious and figuratively clumsy.

- The sloping text, strongly characteristic in 1617, is less so in 1648.
- The ‘T’ is quite dissimilar in its construction.
- The ‘D’ is constructed of a single element in 1617, but is composite by 1648.
- The ‘S’ is long in 1648.
- The ‘G’ is constituted of different shapes.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., p.441. Josselin noted: ‘Made an end of enclosing my new orchard on the green and planted one crabstocke in the farther corner, planted a 2d. by it and some plum trees’.

Despite being considered a ‘Gent’, it appears the signatory of the will may have been somewhat less comfortable with a quill than others of even yeoman status, 61% of whom were literate by 1600. Therefore, despite the statistics illustrating the possibility that Dowsing could have been in the illiterate minority, the issue remains that the author of the note is in doubt. If not Dowsing himself, then who? The writer was, first and foremost, someone who would in all probability have supported the activity in which he or she was being requested to partake. It is reasonable to assume that the nature of the invocation, outside of Protestant theology, would not have been countenanced by all those even within a single village who were able to write, and might otherwise have been considered friends or associates. The scribe was a man or woman of standing and the potential pool of willing accomplices small. A further consideration focuses on whether the writer was present at the concealment of the button or not. When Josselin buried his coin it would appear from the reflective and confiding nature of the diary that his act was solitary.

Therefore, and irrespective of the author of the note, which may even have been his wife, it could have been the case that the Dowsings carried out the concealment in private, despite its location in the parlour. The lifeblood of the house and the heat generated by the spiritual connections coursing through it left no room for suitable alternatives. The children and staff would have been elsewhere, probably asleep, while friends and business partners were left uninvited.

In terms of the format of the note, what might now appear to be its rather perfunctory nature is reflected in Josselin’s diary comment on burying the coin. The significance appeared to be in the act, rather than in its recording, which simply referenced a point in time and acted as a reminder for the individuals concerned, and as an informative, for those in the future.

As if to reinforce the assertion of the sacred and profane surging through this house, an early seventeenth-century token was also discovered, wedged into the opposing fireplace bresummer in the hall. This copper alloy reckoning counter was manufactured
in the Protestant city state of Nuremberg by Hanns Krauwinkel, between 1620 and 1635.\textsuperscript{71} When their official use ceased, their unofficial use as gaming tokens continued, so whether the owners of the house utilised them in their day to day accounts, or traded them as chips in gambling, it would seem that the holder of this particular token – possibly the same Thomas Dowsing who concealed the button years previously - sought to offer it as a way of requesting luck. As with the concealment of the button, the parallel with the burial of Josselin’s coin is striking.\textsuperscript{72} The reverse side of the coin says ‘Die Eeresei Gott Allein’ – loosely translated as ‘to God alone the glory’.

![Plates 79a and 79b show the jetton with the manufacturer’s name and the reference to God.](image)

The dichotomy witnessed in this dwelling and in this family during the seventeenth century is a fine example, expressed multiply and idiosyncratically, of the formality of Protestant ritual and the reliance on folk tradition, particularly ironic given the text inscribed on the counter. MacFarlane noted that ‘the world of phenomena was seen as purposeful and comprehensible; a long enough search would discover the source of almost every event’.\textsuperscript{73} Thus, the body of fixed evidence awaiting discovery offered sufficient glimpses to ensure its adherents continued to apply traditional Christian orthodoxy. Nevertheless, whilst anticipating the answers, Dowsing placed occasional side bets, in order to further ensure a range of positive reactions. This single act embodies the essential theme of the research, illustrating the broad, and broadly Christian, rituals that individuals employed to ensure their own protection.

\textsuperscript{71} http://www.mernick.org.uk/bexley/article3.htm

\textsuperscript{72} Thomas, \textit{Religion and the Decline of Magic}, p.36. ‘There were numerous popular superstitions about the magical value of communion silver as a cure for illness or a lucky charm against danger’.

Playing Card

The layers of belief, reinforced by whispered ritual, and the rhythms of secular and spiritual life, echoed down the generations. In the same room that the button was discovered, a playing card was also found, folded and wedged into the underside of the spine beam, centrally located in the room. The card is dated to a few years before 1680 and is English.

Plate 80 illustrates the example from Cottenham. Plate 81 shows a similar card in good condition, known as a P2, at http://www.plainbacks.com/index%20for%20P.html.

It is fair to assume the householder enjoyed gambling, which had once again become a popular activity. The timing is ironic, given that the author Jonathan Swift described Dowsing’s grandson Thomas Tenison, by then the Archbishop of Canterbury, as a ‘very dull man who had a horror of anything like levity in the clergy, especially of whist’. Its inclusion in the fabric of the house is probably reflective of a wish for luck - perhaps in cards, probably in life generally. Playing cards were previously banned by the

puritans since, as Thomas stated, they sought providence for rather superficial reasons.\textsuperscript{75} In fact, various efforts were made to subdue gambling during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but with little success.\textsuperscript{76} The puritans also suppressed vice and drunkenness, and sought to protect the sacredness of Sunday.\textsuperscript{77}

There is no evidence of an association of the householders at this time with puritanism, though it was certainly quite prominent in the county and, along with counties in East Anglia, Cambridgeshire developed as one of the earliest strongholds for the parliamentary party.\textsuperscript{78} However, by the time of the Rump Parliament in 1650 the strict Elizabethan laws which had criminalized non-attendance at worship had been repealed.

The playing card was manufactured slightly after this interregnum, when legitimate gaming activity had begun to recover, despite residual opposition to games of chance.\textsuperscript{79} This single piece of evidence illustrates a slight loosening of the rein, emphasized by a degree of religious and therefore personal stability which was beginning to take hold across the land. Furthermore, the plague had not reared its head since the 1660s while the horrors of the Civil War slowly receded. This tentative sense of stability and renewal may be glimpsed here in the decision to purchase a pack of cards. In this household gaming was enjoyed in parallel with the more sacred, contemplative nature of praying for prudence, providence or protection, though the potentially meditative nature of card playing might have enabled its own form of prayer. In a further irony, Archbishop Tenison declared that the criterion for an idolater was that ‘he dethroneth God in his imagination, and setteth up some other object in his place’ (such as wishing for luck, as expressed through playing cards). On this basis, according to Jonathan Sheehan, almost everyone would have been suspected of setting up ‘some other object’, not necessarily to replace God entirely and for ever, but to complement Him in times of perceived need.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{75} Thomas, \textit{Religion and the Decline of Magic}, p.142.
\textsuperscript{79} Thomas, \textit{Religion and the Decline of Magic}, p.144.
Pages from the Bible

In the same fireplace as the token was discovered, several pages from a bible were also found, neatly folded and tucked into a shake in the fireplace bresummer. The pages are from the Old Testament books of Judges and Joshua.

Plate 82a illustrates a page from the Book of Judges.

Plate 82b. Pages from Joshua, ch.23.

The removal of particular pages from the Book was not a random act. Contained within the Book of Common Prayer from 1662 was a table that guided individuals on which particular books and chapters of the bible should be read, and on which particular days. This was meant to ensure that most of it was read every year. However, the table was actually far from complete, and only occasional chapters from each were listed, including those above, which dramatically increases the likelihood that these particular chapters were chosen on the basis of the table from 1662. Religious observances were certainly incomplete without reading the bible on a regular basis.  

Judges four and five concern two strong women, Deborah and Jael. These chapters were to be read at matins and evensong respectively. Joshua 10 refers to the battles of Joshua

---

81 Cressy, Literacy and the Social Order, p.2. It is intriguing to note Cressy’s view that it was not only salvation that suffered if one could not read: ‘Civility and Christian neighbourly behaviour also suffered….when people lacked training in literacy’. p.4.
whilst 23 sees him bidding farewell to the leaders of Israel. These were to be read on the first and second Sunday after Trinity, symbolic of the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Judges one, in which the men of Judah fought the Canaanites, and two, which saw the Angel of the Lord speak to the Israelites, were to be read on March 10 and 11. Joshua one, which describes Joshua becoming the leader of the Israelites and two, in which Rahab hid two Israelite spies from the king of Jericho, were to be read on March 16 and 17. The fundamental point that this concealment raises is that the words and quite probably the very paper on which the words were printed, carried such significance that an individual was compelled to secrete them in the bresummer, in the apparently time honoured way, to ensure the sanctity of the bible, the meaning of the words and the very act of its concealment, sustained the spiritual effectiveness on a daily basis, which in turn magnified the degree of piety and magic already so entrenched within the fabric of the home. Acting privately, in a moment when others were not present, would have strengthened the connection between the individual and the otherness with which he or she attempted to connect. And given that Thomas Dowsing the younger died in 1680, it is not unreasonable to assume that this concealment might have taken place, like that of the coin and the button beforehand, during his residency, a further example of a pre-existing practice adapted by Protestants to suit individual concerns.

Vermin

The final concealment involved rats and mice, potential familiars in the seventeenth century. In dismantling and reconstituting the clay daub which formed the external walling in several parts of the house, the present owners discovered a handful of mummified rodents. On the basis of the shape of the rat in Plate 82a, and the strictly confined nature of its final resting place, it is clear that it was dead when it was buried. Had it been alive, it would surely have attempted to escape its muddy fate, coming to rest in a configuration which would have expressed some greater degree of urgency. Why were these vermin mixed in with clay and mud? Given the layers of belief within this property, it becomes entirely plausible that they were built in as a form of

sympathetic magic. We are reminded of Hoggard’s view that cats were sometimes buried in walls to scare off vermin.\textsuperscript{83} Witches’ familiars commonly took the form of rats or mice and so, in an idiosyncratic approach to limit their attraction to the members of the household the builders, perhaps at the behest of the patron, installed the occasional rodent in the soft mud, in a similar way to those who inserted horse bones in the foundations of their homes to prevent a visitation from the Mare.\textsuperscript{84} It should be noted that only a handful of daub panels were removed from the front elevation, so the possibility of further rodents remaining in the fabric cannot be dismissed.

This approach is a significant response to preventing witchcraft, which resonates with the use of the overhead cupboard found in Cottenham 4. It is, likewise, particularly notable that no taper burns were discovered on the substantially intact timber frame, which also resonates with the other dwelling in the village which featured no burns. This particular combination of amulets is, to date, unique in the study area and suggestive of a reliance, over several generations, on alternative methods to protect the household from the varied forms of harm.

Plates 83a and 83b. The rat on the left has been folded around a timber stud and secured with mud.

\textsuperscript{83} See p.194.

\textsuperscript{84} Ewart Evans, \textit{The Pattern Under the Plough}, p.198. As a conservation officer I have been involved in various discussions on wattle and daub over fifteen years, and conversations with homeowners regarding dead rodents discovered whilst reconstituting mud walls have never arisen; Ewart Evans described the more commonly built-in materials and the reasons for their burial, pp.58, 80.
Summary

This property has divulged five individual concealments, each arguably a distinct response to particular concerns. The button and pages from the bible each illustrate an inward looking concern for one’s personal wellbeing, expressed in individual ways but sought through mediation with God. The coin and the playing card represent a wish for luck, despite being contrary to religious orthodoxy, and it is only the final concealment of vermin which appears to seek control of external, malevolent elements. Hamling considered that marks and objects were located about the fireplace in order to protect the most obvious access points from evil. However, in several of these examples it is its recognition as a domestic hearth and its spiritual focus that ensured the various objects were concealed there.85

Their specific locations (excluding the rodents), reflect the nature and use of rooms at certain times. The prescriptive nature of internal space, which was slowly evolving and coalescing, dictated the uses of each room, both spiritually and practically, and as such the location of the concealments was a direct reflection of those spatial and social arrangements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parlour</th>
<th>Hall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) 1617 Button…………………...</td>
<td>2) Token from 1620 – 1635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Pre-1680s playing card…………</td>
<td>3) Seventeenth-century bible pages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has been shown furthermore that the spiritual significance of this particular house was by no means the result of the actions of uneducated fen men. By the 1630s a quarter of the intake for the University of Cambridge were described as yeomen, farmers, husbandmen or plebeians. The opportunity of a university education was certainly available to peasants and others from the villages.86 Indeed, the mother of Archbishop Thomas Tenison was born in this house in 1636. Nor was it the case that primary education on the fen edge was wanting. The distribution of schools to the north and east

of Cambridge showed that this part of the county was well provided for and the general quality of the masters who taught there was particularly high. Well over half the grammar school teachers were graduates from university. Spufford’s conclusion was that, in the seventeenth century the areas best served by schoolmasters ‘were the thickly settled edges of the fen north of Cambridge’.\(^\text{87}\) And despite early reformers creating an enthusiastic program of religious instruction for the young, convinced of its power to coax people away from superstition,\(^\text{88}\) it can be seen that the connectivity of the fen edge villages to the world beyond, and the availability of a good-quality education, did not of themselves automatically rid an individual of his beliefs, orthodox or otherwise.

The emotional reliance on another world, through dialogue mediated via the fabric of the house, continued through the decades, the property acting as a wishing well in its various concealments, and as a spiritual conductor, presenting personal messages to the otherworld. The property is a microcosm of the ritual life of the village, reflected to a greater or lesser extent in dwellings across the country in which hopes and fears were ever expressed on the fabric of the home.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has furthered the debate on the reasons for concealment and whilst the sample is statistically insignificant nevertheless the evidence appears to show how individuals adapted their properties, through the most secret of spiritual activities, in order that their deepest concerns or most earnest fears be addressed in a sustained way. In concealing items of spiritual value, individual’s homes held fast the secrets and wishes of those applicants who requested the most powerful forms of protection beyond the offerings of the Church.

The analysis has furthered the work of Swann by illustrating a connection between concealments and other motifs, and by showing how their spatial arrangement generated a place in which prayers and invocations were expressed. And by proposing that a

\(^{87}\) Ibid., pp.184, 189, 190.

fourth reason why primary literary evidence may be missing from the record of concealment (the expectation that its secrecy was fundamental to its efficacy), so Eastop’s assessment of the practice of concealment has also been furthered. And whilst Atzbach’s theory of accidental or waste deposit has not been directly addressed, the idiosyncratic, particular nature of these concealments has shown how, in at least a percentage of instances, ritual was clearly a fundamental driving force behind their application.

In this chapter the voice has been used in a whisper. The secrets conveyed were expressed directly to the spiritual recipient. No-one else was required to be involved as this would have weakened the connection between the applicant and the otherworld, and thus the sanctity and gravity of the requests being made.
CONCLUSIONS
The Major Contribution

The fundamental contribution of this work has been to provide an insight into the nature of domestic expression in regard to social status and the often secret world of personal belief, through a period of cultural expansion and religious turmoil. An interdisciplinary approach has proved crucial to exploring and interpreting the manifestations. Important new empirical evidence has also been discovered and additional theoretical perspectives provided.

The conclusions have built upon the findings in Hamling’s and Watt’s research on religiously inspired decoration by including further, sometimes lower status vernacular properties which witnessed individually and informally applied motifs as testament to the countless individuals who left little else as evidence of their spiritual activity. The research has not only considered the landscape of domestic religiosity, it has explored the texture of individual belief. It has also given support to Johnson’s theory of the hierarchy and eventual enclosure of space, at least in part for the increase in privacy afforded, by illustrating how domestic expressions were employed in the various rooms commensurate with the gravity and sensitivity of their meaning.

However, it has questioned Johnson’s observation that a strong sense of the individual did not necessarily exist between 1400 and 1600. Selfhood has been explored through the lens of domestic piety, and through the use of several motifs the research has cast the individual into stark relief. By so doing, this work has elevated the individual from the group, highlighting singular examples of early modern folk whose expressions were the result of activities and beliefs articulated in unique ways. Nevertheless, whilst the character of the individual has been glimpsed, this work claims only to have illustrated his uniqueness in early modern history. Much work remains to be done before it can be claimed that the spiritual personalities of early modern people have been fully understood.
Henry Glassie’s observation that ‘material expression is but a mask of mind’, is supported by these findings, in that individuals’ hopes and fears were ever expressed upon the fabric of the home. Thus, the principal discoveries relate to the widespread application of motifs as expressions of hope and requests for protection, beyond the purview of the parish church. These were generated by a swathe of society who adopted and modified practices to suit personal requirements, occasionally sanctioned by the Church, though in many cases not, which in turn amplifies current evidence illustrating that the delineation between orthodox practice, and magical practice, remained quite unclear well into the seventeenth century.

Whilst Sheehan noted a distinction between the secular, everyday world of work and the sacred as fundamental to the human experience, yet it appears the two worlds were actually conjoined to a significantly greater extent than has previously been considered. And though Erikson concluded that the principal place of religious encounter migrated from the home to the church in the medieval period in Scandinavia, in England such a clear distinction remains open to question.

It has also been found that the amount of Catholicism on the fen edge during the period, or at least those individuals with vestigial belief and reliant to varying degrees upon the remains of its rituals, was greater than is traditionally assumed. Whilst sometimes misleadingly succinct denominational labels can only be ascribed to a few individuals in this work, it would appear that a notable volume of people in the area practised idiosyncratic forms of Catholic ritual – though whether in combination with a degree of Catholic belief or not is beyond the scope of this work.

The evolving domestic planform and increasing levels of privacy within the home enabled occupants to find a suitable space to express themselves, semi-privately or privately as appropriate, relative to the significance of the message. It is proposed in this research that in some instances the enclosure of domestic space was in part the result of

---

the desire by individuals to express themselves in ways that more open forms of
dwelling could not so easily accommodate. Indeed, it is suggested that new levels of
domestic privacy did nothing less than facilitate the development of a safe environment
for personal expression beyond the view of outsiders, the scope of orthodox Christian
teaching and the control of the Church.

Many of the conclusions are the result of deciphering circumstantial evidence and, as
Lucy Botscharow stated ‘Decipherment is difficult and interpretation maybe impossible,
but if one is to ‘‘read’’ the history of man’s past, then an attempt must be made: to fail
to do so is to leave archaeology with only sterile remains of unread texts’.4

Magic and Religion

Despite the largely unknown source of many of the beliefs expressed here, domestic
manifestations were both formulaic and individual, expressed as a personal response to
generally perceived concerns. The distinction between religion and magic was
impossible to discern. Whilst Scribner considered that the ways in which the sacred was
experienced through the secular in the period before the Reformation made it
problematic in differentiating between religion and magic,5 it is argued here that the
indistinguishable nature of the two remained long after the ripples of the Reformation
had subsided.

Early modern Christianity was notably multifaceted. Its elaborate self-fulfilling rites
were representative of the human experience in which broad cultural and spiritual
significance surpassed the limited and particular contexts in which its more magical
aspects were summoned. Religion related to the fundamental issues of human existence,
whilst magic addressed only a restricted range of concerns, including protection from
witchcraft and remedies for sickness.6 Nevertheless, this range of functions was

---
sufficient for magic to vie for the attention of a broad range of individuals for a significant period of time.

Catholicism and Protestantism

Valletta considered that the success of Catholicism lay partially in its ability to adopt and neutralise pre-Christian beliefs,\(^7\) though in spite of this observation confirmation of the neutralisation of those beliefs in the early modern period remains unproven.

According to Gaskill, by the mid sixteenth century the Reformation had turned clergymen from miracle-workers into no more than spiritual counsellors and, among an agrarian population faced with famine or disease, he believed a reliance on miracle-working was clearly the preferred option.\(^8\) Whilst sweeping in its generalisation and suggestive of rapid and widespread effect, this fundamental change nevertheless indicates the psychological shift experienced to varying degrees by early modern churchgoers.

By the end of Elizabeth’s reign, John Warren considered that Catholicism was the religion of but a small group of gentry. The poorer sorts were losing interest in its power, and its influence slowly became restricted to areas of England distant from London.\(^9\) However, debate over the atrophied state of Catholicism and its centres of influence continued. Jeffery Hankins argued that in Essex, an apparently strongly Protestant and puritan county, there was a significant input from the Catholic gentry into running the county thanks in large part to their administrative skill and political connections.\(^10\) Michael Braddick noted that the overarching needs of local governance often saw Protestant and Catholic neighbours negotiate their own religious and secular environments for the general good of business, and Diarmaid MacCulloch amplified the point, stating that by the end of the sixteenth century the Catholic gentry and the

---


government had actually settled down to ‘a rather surprising degree of symbiosis’.\textsuperscript{11}

This pragmatism, Braddick considered, might actually have promoted a Catholic patriarchy, even in counties of relative conformity.\textsuperscript{12} What is quite notable is that various historians including Hankins, Martin Ingram and John Bossy estimated the number of active Catholics actually rose from approximately 40,000 at the end of Elizabeth’s reign, to more than 60,000 by the start of the civil war,\textsuperscript{13} and this may account in part for the frequency and distribution of motifs on the fen edge.

Ethan Shagan noted that religious structures, as well as political and social ones were influenced by, or evolved in reference to, what he considered remained at this date an essentially Catholic population, in contradiction to Warren’s observation that it was the religion of only a small group of gentry. In echoing the observations contained within the Introduction, Peter Marshall stated that much recent scholarship on the Reformation was conscious of the flexibility of religious labels while Marsh, also aware of this flexibility, considered the Reformation to be more a negotiated adjustment of widespread practices in piety.\textsuperscript{14}

It is perhaps no wonder then that when it came to issues concerning life and death, many people were inclined to superstition,\textsuperscript{15} and the principle that the outcome was significantly more important than the means of obtaining it, entirely pragmatic.

This pragmatism is expressed in an individual way in the heraldic shields in Wetherden, representative of administrative and political affiliations and irrespective of the occupants’ religious connections. Hill summarised to similar effect:- ‘The idea that the spirit from which we act is more important than the external form of the action had been essential to Protestantism from the start’.\textsuperscript{16} This theory is crucial to the research, and is a

\textsuperscript{13} Hankins, ‘Papists, power and puritans’, pp.689-717.
\textsuperscript{15} Gaskill, \textit{Witchfinders}, p.10.
\textsuperscript{16} C. Hill, \textit{A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People. John Bunyan and his Church} (Oxford, 1988), p.188.
reason for the variety of meaning contained within the same basic forms of expression - and conversely therefore, nuanced forms of expression reflected idiosyncratic, but largely similar meanings. However, diametrically opposing this view, and reflective of the Catholic attitude, was that the ritual of action was as significant to the outcome as the attitude and invocation involved in its articulation.

Another fundamental conclusion focuses on the number of Catholics in the county. Gaskill asserted that there were significant numbers of puritan dissenters in Cambridgeshire, from the later sixteenth century, and while a measure of strength is not considered here, it is suggested that, from the evidence gathered, a greater number of Catholics and church papists - and consequently fewer prayer book Protestants - actually lived in the southern fen during the later sixteenth and earlier seventeenth centuries than was previously thought. Whilst this cannot be conclusively proven and, as Spufford observed, evidence for individual religious affiliations in the county will ever be unsatisfactory, nevertheless because defining boundaries remains complex, questions have surely been raised over assertions of the distribution of Catholics and Protestants in the county.

Whilst aspects of Catholic belief played a major role in the lives of many until the early seventeenth century, its repetitive rituals and routines the stuff of every Sunday, there remained sufficient psychological space for the individual to consider less orthodox beliefs. While wearing amulets and reciting prayers might have been taken to extremes, Thomas questioned whether it mattered, ‘so long as their effect was to bind the people closer to the true Church and the true God’. A method to calibrate the extent of magical or religious influence is also beyond the scope of this research, but it is contested here that the five forms of expression considered all developed from a common ancestor. (That is not to say however that any
or all of the expressions began at a particular point in the evolution of Christianity. Indeed, their undeniably atavistic nature might point to origins before the arrival of Christendom.) The narrative contained within relief carving on wooden panelling reflected the messages within paintings and other carvings which adorned the walls of the parish church, as well as the convenience of advertising status. The adoption of taper burns can be seen to have evolved from a plethora of Catholic rituals, while there is evidence for the early Christian employment of hexafoils in the Church and other graffiti, religiously inspired but realised within the home. And concealment, the most secretive activity and that which might at first appear least conformist in its origins, might have developed from a documented medieval Catholic anecdote concerning John Schorn’s capture of the devil, in the fourteenth century.

The instability and nebulous nature of organised religion through the late medieval and early modern period stood in contrast to the developing material reliability afforded by the early modern home. As a place of refuge and sanctuary the church had stood for generations, but with the arrival of domestic comforts including a greater degree of structural permanence, notwithstanding the continuous scourge of fire, the introduction of individual rooms, dependable masonry fireplaces, window glass and soft furnishings, so individuals experienced greater levels of comfort. Plague and famine withdrew, and access to an education furthered feelings of stability, and as such the pastoral offerings of the Church receded as the individual sought for himself the support he required.

Domestic Architecture

Lori Ann Garner observed that by increasing an appreciation of medieval architecture, a greater understanding is obtained of the designer’s craft, the structures they erected and inhabited and the traditions they shared. In terms of the impacts of planform and ornament on domestic fenland architecture, I have shown how individual belief has both been influenced by, and enabled, domestic spatial arrangement.

Johnson questioned the reason why some halls gave way in the sixteenth century to enclosed, double-storey dwellings. The conclusion reached here is that the desire to express one’s beliefs played a partial, but nevertheless, fundamental role in space shaping, and in some cases the enclosure of space came about as a result of the desire to express oneself with a greater degree of privacy than had hitherto been possible.

The Spatial Arrangement of Expressions

An overview of this research sees some general patterns emerge. As described, the spatial choreography of the home played a part in the manifestations of belief. Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the evolving privacy, some of the expressions were employed consciously in the most public of domestic spaces in order to explain, teach or remind those who would come into contact with them. Taper burns were distributed throughout the home, and were created by a broad range of individuals with a broad range of beliefs, who actually employed them to serve similar functions, though in varying ways. Niches were adopted by Catholics predominantly in ground floor fireplaces, to serve ritual purposes, though as time passed they were embraced as practical spaces by Protestants. Hexafoils were created by Catholics and in this research were only found in the hall and parlour, but were employed in later periods as a form of secular decoration in the home as well as on furniture. Conjoined letters engraved into the fabric of the home were created by Catholics, and were here found exclusively in upper chambers. The act of concealment was usually carried out upstairs, though several individual items, discovered in the hall and parlour, were shown to have been placed by Protestants employing a little magic.

The Vocal Metaphor

The three stages of the vocal metaphor employed in this research have enabled an understanding of the significance and sensitivity of the manifestations witnessed here. Individual communication with the other world can clearly be discerned, which sees the theories of Easton and Dean furthered. In their work the individual motif is an expression of particular concerns, though largely free of spatial context and any analysis
of distribution. However, it has been discovered here that the location of expressions within the home was the result of their meaning and the sensitivity of their message, a fundamental aspect of each and every application of a motif.

**Spiritual Frequency**

A new theory borne out of this research, it explains the adoption of a range of motifs in strategic locations about the home to safeguard or amplify communication with the otherworld, and relates here to the application of taper burns, graffiti and concealment. Whilst the palimpsest approach to invoking otherworldly assistance is evidenced only briefly in this research nevertheless the philosophy of employing a suite of protection is reflective of one of the fundamental threads that weaves through this work. The adoption of a variety of motifs, employed to ensure protection from all conceivable – and inconceivable – threats, and applied cautiously and ritually, reflects the way that an individual sought to prevent draughts from entering the home in a range of locations. The through flow of air across a screen's passage, an historic space designed to divide the utilitarian rooms from the hall, and to ensure the heat from one was not spent on the functional spaces of the other, is evidenced in several of the properties within the study.

And of those, there is sufficient archaeological evidence remaining to illustrate the practice of marking the liminal points by both entrances, for the purposes of protection. The other examples in which the desire for closeness to God was expressed are equally clearly illustrated, the fundamental aspect linking both forms of spiritual frequency being the significance of liminality, the transference from one space to another, and metaphorically, the movement from one psychological state to another.

**Niches**

The significant role of the early modern domestic niche, borrowed from church and used to accommodate objects imbued with ritual value, is analogous with the dwelling in which it was situated, a place to accommodate individuals who resonated with spirituality. The initial use of at least a proportion of niches for Catholic ritual has been
uncovered in the first analysis of its kind in which architectural evidence, wills, inventories and Reformation history have combined to highlight a design detail little considered until now.

Cressy stated that re-housing religious ceremonies within the home continued Church tradition, and in the literal sense of rehousing particular sacramentals, the niche developed an essential role. In further support, various modern scholars showed that the icon was both a powerful image in itself and a source of great power, as it represented God in humanity and forged the link between His world and ours. Thus, through its power the two worlds were conjoined. An obvious location for these icons, oscillating with spiritual authority, the domestic niche was adopted in timely fashion as, by the end of Edward VI’s reign, those in many churches had been emptied, blocked in and plastered over.

In combination with the evidence from taper burns, the case has been made for the presence of Catholics in an area traditionally considered to have been largely Protestant by the later sixteenth and earlier seventeenth centuries. Nevertheless, in time and with the crumbling medieval faith, the employment of niches for practical purposes by Protestants became inevitable, whether constructed to serve a functional role from the outset in the later seventeenth century, or re-deployed in an older dwelling by subsequent families simply for the safe storage of candlesticks. This form of desacralising, whether conscious or not, ensured their broad adoption and by the later seventeenth century they housed the accoutrements of daily life including bibles, spectacles and accounts books – as well, no doubt, as the occasional medieval candlestick and salt cellar, reminders of Catholic ritual and a repressed faith.

25 A suggestion made by Diarmaid MacCulloch in discussion, August, 2014.
Taper Burns

In this research it has been found that tapers, particularly as devotional prompts, and specifically in the act of their burning, were employed by Catholics, who inherently understood their meaning, within the sanctuary of their homes, where adaptations of old rituals developed, enabled by the privacy offered through the evolution of domestic space.

The Candlemas ritual which survived the Reformation, and the blessing of these sacramentals within the home, put power within the hands of the Catholic laity at a time when it was being taken away by the Protestant state. The symbolism of candles remained in the Ten Articles signed by Cromwell. However, in re-fetishizing them, those used in Candlemas were henceforth employed, as Duffy stated, not to protect citizens from the influences of evil but in memory of Christ, the light of the world.26

Through time, the idiosyncrasies of interpretation and evolving religious doctrine, the domestic application of taper burns continued the conjuration of things beyond human understanding. However, the sacred use of tapers was ultimately adopted in a lukewarm way by Protestants who adapted their meanings to accommodate their own concerns in a way that a swathe of early modern society developed or continued to understand.

The frequency and patterns of distribution of taper burns help to reinforce the contention that their acceptance amongst peers was general, and their use by an extensive religious swathe of the middling sort, undeniable. In terms of their place in the research, their transitional status, in between the projection of niches and relief carvings, and the introversion of concealment, indicates their manifold application. We recall Dean’s proposition that burns were strictly the expression of practicing Catholics, generally in reaction to the Reformation, which is undoubtedly reflected in the reason behind a percentage of burns. Nevertheless, the occasion of a secretive, isolated application references more contentious beliefs, physically and metaphorically at a distance from the religion of the state.

The current research plugs one of several gaps between the two opposing views on their use, by contesting that a large but indeterminate number of individuals adopted and adapted the burn to suit their requirements. Thus, there are three groups which have emerged from this research. The Catholics and the Protestants, clearly discerned at either end of the theological discussion - and the inbetweeners, Catholics less strident, less expressive and less wedded to their beliefs than those who stand out in the annals of Reformation history, those who expressed their beliefs part-way through their spiritual journey from the old religion to the new, and those indecisive or more astute who chose to select a practice (and possibly an associated belief) from a suite of expressions to help them in whichever way they saw fit. It is this possibility of adopting and adapting that appears to resonate with the corpus of circumstantial evidence, and is supported by historians such as MacCulloch, Shagan and Ryrie. This adoption amongst the indiscernible middle group represents an acknowledgement of the spiritual value of the taper. Certainly the employment of a single burn, sometimes in combination with other motifs, was considered sufficient by many to serve a protective function, amplified in the fundamental tenet of Protestantism that proposed that the spirit from which one acted was more important than the form of that action. At the opposing end however, devout Catholics were required to express their invocation in particularized, ritual forms in order to obtain similar outcomes and hence the frequent, even frenetic, application of tapers.

Though Cambridgeshire was home to significant numbers of Protestants during our timeframe, there is nevertheless evidence of a continuing Catholic influence. In support of this conclusion, and significantly, there are two examples of properties that exhibited no burns, despite high levels of extant timber framing. In both cases primary evidence indicated a strong sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Protestant affiliation:-

Bottisham Place, home to the Hassells, erstwhile members of the Family of Love and Protestant churchgoers, as evidenced through their work for the Church, and in the form of their wills.

333 High Street, Cottenham, home to Thomas Dowsing whose daughter was remembered at the time of her baptism with the concealment of a button from her baptismal garment. His children are recorded in the parish registers and, whilst it cannot be taken as an indication of his own faith, it is tantalizing that his grandson, Thomas Tenison, became the Archbishop of Canterbury.

**Graffiti**

The fundamental discovery in this chapter relates to spiritual frequency, but whilst the theory is explained and considered here, it relates equally well to the application of taper burns and concealments. Indeed, for some individuals the adoption of multiple invocations created a spiritual and temporal palimpsest which further amplified the power of the invocation, here termed the ‘trinity of devotion’.

The conjoining of certain letter forms has also been studied for the first time in the domestic context. The conjunction sought to reinforce a connection between the applicant and Mary or God in a similar way to the practice of spiritual frequency and the trinity of devotion, both of which sought forcibly to fuse the individual with his saviour through physical proximity.

**Concealment**

In a similar way that the secret cupboard and various niches acted as repositories for prayers and wishes, so several dwellings appear to have acted as repositories for concealed items imbued with spiritual significance. In Dowsing’s home the very fabric was infused with the confidences of its residents, and would have witnessed the daily activity of prayer as individuals went about their business. It is an example of the thread of superstitious belief that wove through the early modern period and, like the prophecies in the Cottenham register, it is interlaced with Protestantism. The layers of belief, manifold and idiosyncratic, acted as a microcosm of faith, and there is little reason to suggest that its secrets were expressed in any ways unique to this particular family.
Where Now?

Rapoport stated that ‘genre de vie’ included all the cultural, spiritual, material and social aspects of life which affected material or spiritual form, and he saw dwellings as the physical manifestation of this.\(^{28}\) However, having analysed a range of properties it is found that the definition of genre de vie requires amendment in order to embrace the ultimate reasons for, and physical manifestations of, belief. Indeed, any future analysis of the early modern home would be incomplete without such an assessment, a fundamental approach to the exploration of parishioners’ attitudes and one which casts a sideways glance at life.

The future of architectural historical analysis lies to some extent in scientific development. Luminescence dating of brickwork is proving successful, but remains limited.\(^{29}\) Ageing brickwork more accurately places the construction of fireplaces and their attendant niches - and other brick walls - from which a typology might be produced to highlight the chronology of such features, to be read in association with the construction of the property, the insertion of its first floor and its subsequent compartmentalisation. And of similar significance would be to date the brickwork in relation to the sale of the relevant parish church’s vestments.

The evidence uncovered concerning the adoption of the domestic niche for ritual purposes is but an initial foray. Another aspect of study that would repay the effort involves the relationship between the frequency of niches in and on the facades of churches and the associated frequency within the domestic sphere, as well as their relative locations in both, ideally in combination with genealogical research to establish the religious influences of the individuals who constructed them.

Illustration 21 showing niches cut into the face of the jambs in a sixteenth century house in Suffolk, currently the subject of local authority enforcement for various unauthorised works to a listed building.

In central Suffolk there is a concentration of churches which feature niches set into external buttresses, a design detail not found on the fen edge, though in at least one instance in central Suffolk, such niches have been found in domestic property, perhaps as a result of the influence of those within the buttresses of the parish church, and another indication of the conjoining of sacred and secular.

In terms of the application of taper burns, what of the areas in England and northern Europe in which stone was used instead of timber for bresummers and walling? Similar concerns were no doubt expressed, but how? Furthermore, is the correlation between the proportion of Catholics and Protestants in northern Europe and the relative levels of their ritual activity reflective of the frequency and distribution of those who lived in the southern fen?

Spiritual frequencies generated within church also require further thought. It has been shown that taper burns exist both on north and south doors and, in the domestic context the spatial arrangement of burns on both external walls above a cross passage sought to protect the occupants from harm. Did this form of spiritual protection evolve in the medieval rituals of the Church and migrate into domestic property, in similar ways to the other rituals studied here? Certainly, there is tantalizing evidence.

Plate 84. One of three crucifixes marking the stone jambs to the north door at St. Nicholas’ church, Bedfield, Suffolk.

In Bedfield parish church in Suffolk the external jambs of the north door feature two incised crucifixes on the left jamb and a single one on the right jamb. The inside of the south door is notably marked with taper burns. Whilst liminal space has been a crucial by-product of built form for centuries, it is the possibility that this sacred ‘cross passage’, created by the disposition of the doors, was employed to prevent the ingress and egress of evil in ways reminiscent of later domestic arrangements.
It is clear that this exploratory thesis has opened up an area of early modern life little considered to date, though it will in time develop to produce a landscape of personal religion clearer and more compelling than the foregoing.
APPENDIX 1

This appendix includes photographs of all recesses, niches and fireplace cupboards within the study area, with opening dimensions in millimetres. On occasion it was not possible to obtain accurate depth measurements and in these cases the dimension has been left ‘unknown’.

78 High Street, Bottisham. 190mm h x 120mm w x 220mm d.

Newnham Farmhouse, Low Road, Burwell. 260mm h x 380mm w x 130mm d.
Tan House, Mandeville, Burwell. 595mm h x 350mm w x unknown depth.

333 High Street, Cottenham. Lhs jamb: Unknown height x 565mm w x 225mm d. 375mm h x 330mm w x 225mm d.
333 High Street, Cottenham. Rhs jamb: 590mm h x 340mm w x 225mm d.

333 High Street, Cottenham. Opposing fireplace. 370mm h x 230mm w x 225mm d.
120 High Street, Cottenham. 330mm h x 230mm w x 160mm d.

135 High Street, Cottenham. 395mm h to apex x 155mm w x 120mm d.
Home Farm, 25 High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton. 450mm h x 230mm w x 170mm d.

22 High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton. 270mm h x 440mm w x 230mm d (but the depth has been altered since construction).
The Three Tuns, High Street, Fen Drayton. 350mm h to apex x 290mm w x 120mm d.

White Roses, Reach. 345mm h to apex x 230mm w x 200mm d.
Priest’s House, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck. Lhs: 300mm h to apex x 205mm w x 150mm d. Rhs: 270mm h x 285mm w 100mm d.

Lordship Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck. 380mm h to apex x 220mm w x 90mm w.
Appletrees, 85 High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck. 330mm h to apex x 295mm w x 200mm d.

Rose Cottage, 42 High Street, Swaffham Prior. 390mm h x 275mm w x 120mm d.
Rose Cottage, 42 High Street, Swaffham Prior. Lhs: 480mm h to apex x 230mm w x
110mm d. Rhs: 475mm h to apex x 230mm w x 110mm d.

Rose Cottage, 42 High Street, Swaffham Prior. 325mm h x 250mm w x 120mm d (x
3no.).
Goodwin Manor, School Lane, Swaffham Prior. 280mm h x 240mm w x unknown depth.

2 High Street, Willingham. Lhs: 360mm h to apex x 285mm w x 160mm d. Middle: 170mm h to apex x 175mm w x 100mm d. Rhs: 880mm h to apex of corbelled recess x 780mm w x 220mm d overall. 480mm h to apex of arched recess x 460mm w x 120mm d.
The Swan, High Street, Elstow. Lhs on chimney breast: 200mm h x 190mm w x 70mm d. Rhs: 190mm h x 190mm w x 70mm d. Within the inglenook, on lhs: 220mm h x 200mm w x 110mm d. Rhs: 240mm h x 220mm w x 110mm d.

The Emplins, Church Lane, Gamlingay. 460mm h x 345mm w x 230mm d (approximately).
Manor House, High Street, Hemingford Grey. 430mm h x 340mm w x unknown depth.

The Thatched House, Kirtling. Lhs on chimney breast: 300mm h to apex x 185mm w x 120mm d. Rhs: 300mm h to apex x 185mm w x 120mm d. Within the inglenook on the lhs jamb: 920mm h to apex x 590mm w x 230mm d. Within the inglenook on rear wall, on lhs: 1260mm h to apex x 410mm w x 230mm d. Rhs: 300mm h to apex x 310mm h to apex x 110mm d. Within the inglenook on the rhs jamb: 910mm h to apex x 590mm w x 235mm d. Up flue on both jambs: 290mm h x 280mm w x 260mm d (x 2no.).
Conduit House, The Green West, Long Melford. 365mm h at apex x 240mm w x 110mm d (x 2no.).

Wood Farm. Wootton. 350mm w x 505mm h x unknown depth.
APPENDIX 1a

Dimensions of niches within and surrounding fireplaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Measurement in millimetres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Height</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78 High Street Bottisham</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newnham Farmhouse, Low Road, Burwell</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan House, Mandeville, Burwell</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>333 High Street, Cottenham</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 High Street, Cottenham</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135 High Street, Cottenham</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Farm, 25 High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Three Tuns, High Street, Fen Drayton</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Roses, Reach</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest's House, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lordship Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appletrees, 85 High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose Cottage, High Street, Swaffham Prior</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 no.</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodwin Manor, School Lane, Swaffham Prior</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 High Street, Wilingham</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Swan, High Street, Elstow</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Emplins, Church Lane, Gamlingay</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor House, High Street, Hemingford Grey</td>
<td>430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thatched House, Kirtling</td>
<td>2 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 no.</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduit House, The Green West, Long Melford</td>
<td>2 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood Farm, Wootton</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

Distribution of taper burns and incidence of ‘salt niches’.

The properties which currently exhibit taper burns and at least a single niche in the fireplace are illustrated by parish, with a brief description of their location within the settlement, and any notable features of the niche.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Fireplaces</th>
<th>No. of taper burns</th>
<th>Salt niches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottisham 2</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4 on 2 bresummers</td>
<td>1 with side channel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 2</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>parallel to High Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 on bresummer and 1 on stave window 19 on 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 1</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 7</td>
<td>C17th</td>
<td>fen edge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16 on 1 bresummer, 1 on another</td>
<td>2 (probably later bread ovens)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 8</td>
<td>C17th</td>
<td>parallel to High Street</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2 on bresummer</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 1</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>corner of High Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 on bresummer</td>
<td>3 in cellar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 2</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>set back from High Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 on 1 bresummer at rear of house</td>
<td>1 with hinged door in fireplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 3</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14 in 3 locations (7 on 2 bresummers) 5 on brace and 4 on stud</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 5</td>
<td>C15th and C16th</td>
<td>set back from High Street</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck 1</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7 and 1 on bresummers</td>
<td>2 in 1 fireplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck 2</td>
<td>C14th and C16th</td>
<td>set back from High Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 on 1 bresummer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck 3</td>
<td>C17th</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 on bresummer, 2 by ff window and 2 on ff stud 0</td>
<td>1 in fireplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck 4</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterbeach 2</td>
<td>C17th</td>
<td>on village green</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7 (2 on reused timber)</td>
<td>1 in fireplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottenham 1</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 centrally located on bresummer</td>
<td>2 symmetrically placed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottenham 2</td>
<td>C17th</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 symmetrically placed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen Drayton 1</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>in centre of village</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 on inside face of bresummer</td>
<td>3 (2 symmetrically placed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingham 1</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>High Street</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen Ditton 1</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>main road</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 immediately next to each other</td>
<td>4 in 1 fireplace (1 is a bread oven)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen Ditton 2</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>main road</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 (5 on 1 bresummer and 5 on bresummer in external kitchen)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Century</td>
<td>Location Type</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Date Features</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirtling</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>main road</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 on bressummer (and 22 in 5 other locations) 6 (plus 2 for seating) 4 with channels 1 in fireplace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamlingay</td>
<td>C15th</td>
<td>opposite church</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 on 1 bresummer 1 in fireplace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolnhurst</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>set back from side road</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22 on 1 bresummer 2 in C17th brickwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetherden</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>opposite church</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15 on 1 bresummer, 33 on another 1 in later brickwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metfield</td>
<td>C16th</td>
<td>opposite church</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 on bresummer 2 in 2 fireplaces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battisford</td>
<td>C15th</td>
<td>on side road</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 on 1 ft stave window, 6 on another, plus occasional others 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 3

These illustrations precisely map each taper burn on all 17 fireplace bresummers in the study area and 6 in the surrounding region. The size and depth of burn is not indicated.

Address: 78 High Street, Bottisham (ground floor)
Dimensions: 3280mm x 300mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: 78 High Street, Bottisham (1st floor)
Dimensions: 1870mm x 230mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: 20 High Street, Burwell
Dimensions: 1560mm x 200mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: 16 Low Road, Burwell
Dimensions: 3070mm x 200mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: 64 Low Road, Burwell
Dimensions: 2950mm x 290mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: 125 North Street, Burwell
Dimensions: 2750mm x 265mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: 120 High Street, Cottenham
Dimensions: 3220mm x 325mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: 135 High Street, Cottenham
Dimensions: 2060mm x 200mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: 22 High Ditch Road, Fen Ditton
Dimensions: 3060mm x 310mm
Scale: 1:20
Address:  White Roses, The Hythe, Reach
Dimensions:  2050mm x 275mm
Scale:  1:10
Address: 85 High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck
Dimensions: 3400mm x 380mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: Priests House, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck
Dimensions: 3450mm x 290mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: Priests House, High Street, Swaffham Bulbeck
Dimensions: 2170mm x 280mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: 42 High Street, Swaffham Prior
Dimensions: 2400mm x 240mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: Goodwin Manor Farm, Swaffham Prior
Dimensions: 1910mm x 270mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: 19 Greenside, Waterbeach
          (ground floor)
Dimensions: 2100mm x 160mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: 19 Greenside, Waterbeach (first floor)
Dimensions: 2100mm x 160mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: 11-12 The Causeway, Godmanchester
Dimensions: 2330mm x 270mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: The Thatched House, The Street, Kirtling
Dimensions: 3030mm x 350mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: The Emplins, Church Street, Gamlingay
Dimensions: 3070mm x 300mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: Manor House, School Lane, Bolnhurst
Dimensions: 3380mm x 240mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: Huntsman and Hounds Cottage, The Street, Metfield, Suffolk
Dimensions: 2020mm x 270mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: Huntsman and Hounds Cottage, The Street, Metfield, Suffolk
Dimensions: 3050mm x 290mm
Scale: 1:20
Address: Stoakes Cottage, Church Street, Wetherden (first floor)
Dimensions: 2240mm x 270mm
Scale: 1:10
Address: Stoakes Cottage, Church Street, Wetherden (ground floor)

Dimensions: 3120mm x 250mm

Scale: 1:20
APPENDIX 4

Incidence of tapers burns and the proximity of the host property to its parish church.

This table gives a grid reference for each dwelling, its approximate distance from the parish church and a brief overview of the degree of alteration that each set of timbers has experienced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address</th>
<th>NGR</th>
<th>Distance church</th>
<th>Line of sight?</th>
<th>No. of visible tapers</th>
<th>Obscured studs?</th>
<th>Obscured bresummer?</th>
<th>Makeover?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willingham 1</td>
<td>540367270462</td>
<td>125m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willingham Parish Church</strong></td>
<td>540481270502</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterbeach 1</td>
<td>549652265213</td>
<td>175m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterbeach 2</td>
<td>549538265420</td>
<td>500m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5 (and 2 on reused timber)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterbeach 3</td>
<td>549725265143</td>
<td>30m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, partially classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Waterbeach Parish Church</strong></td>
<td>549740265101</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottenham 1</td>
<td>545330267466</td>
<td>1700m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottenham 2</td>
<td>545194268068</td>
<td>850m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottenham 3</td>
<td>545178267988</td>
<td>900m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottenham 7</td>
<td>545470268561</td>
<td>30m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1 (reused stud)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cottenham Parish Church</strong></td>
<td>545517268363</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen Ditton 1</td>
<td>548762260166</td>
<td>650m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen Ditton 2</td>
<td>548716260154</td>
<td>625m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fen Ditton Parish Church</strong></td>
<td>548267260375</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottisham 1</td>
<td>555033260156</td>
<td>750m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottisham 2</td>
<td>554473260471</td>
<td>75m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bottisham Parish Church</strong></td>
<td>554557260489</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 1</td>
<td>559024266074</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19 (probably imported timber)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 2</td>
<td>558518267152</td>
<td>1300m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 3</td>
<td>558458266831</td>
<td>1000m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (1 stone)</td>
<td>Yes, classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 4</td>
<td>558980265930</td>
<td>200m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 5</td>
<td>558473266653</td>
<td>800m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 6</td>
<td>558803265966</td>
<td>250m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwell 7</td>
<td>558908268119</td>
<td>2200m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;36</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Burwell Parish Church</strong></td>
<td>558960266066</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck 1</td>
<td>555571262251</td>
<td>30m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No (but 1 of 3 is stone)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck 2</td>
<td>555775262685</td>
<td>1500m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No (but 1 of 3 is stone)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>Length</td>
<td>Usage</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck 3</td>
<td>555586262340</td>
<td>200m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes (1 of 2 is stone)</td>
<td>Yes, partially classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck 4</td>
<td>555645262601</td>
<td>500m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, partially classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Bulbeck parish church</td>
<td>555526262247</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 1</td>
<td>556740264025</td>
<td>125m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 2</td>
<td>556635264034</td>
<td>300m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 3</td>
<td>556777263996</td>
<td>100m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14 (4 on reused timber)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 4</td>
<td>556385263842</td>
<td>675m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0 (possibly obscured)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 5</td>
<td>556490263913</td>
<td>500m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, partially classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior 6</td>
<td>557086264604</td>
<td>1200m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0 (possibly obscured)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior Parish Church 1</td>
<td>556800263933</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swaffham Prior Parish Church 2</td>
<td>556819263897</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach 1</td>
<td>55650526277</td>
<td>300m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reach Parish Church (site of)</td>
<td>556709266227</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen Drayton 1</td>
<td>533900268244</td>
<td>375m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fen Drayton Parish Church</td>
<td>533961268115</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swavesey 1</td>
<td>536068268837</td>
<td>800m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0 (possibly obscured)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, classical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swavesey Parish Church</td>
<td>536268269380</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamlingay 1</td>
<td>524197252311</td>
<td>100m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>&gt;8</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamlingay Parish Church</td>
<td>524117252294</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirtling 1</td>
<td>568705256622</td>
<td>&gt;2000m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;15</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirtling Parish Church</td>
<td>568682257615</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balsham 1</td>
<td>558517250966</td>
<td>375m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balsham Parish Church</td>
<td>558784250864</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolnhurst 1</td>
<td>508540259863</td>
<td>&gt;1800m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;22</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolnhurst Parish Church</td>
<td>508076258689</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metfield 1</td>
<td>629477580271</td>
<td>40m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metfield Parish Church</td>
<td>629422280331</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetherden 1</td>
<td>600890262817</td>
<td>40m</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>&gt;50</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetherden Parish Church</td>
<td>600850262775</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Melford 1</td>
<td>586507246453</td>
<td>&gt;300m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Phone Number</td>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>Height</td>
<td>Wildfire</td>
<td>Flood</td>
<td>Storm</td>
<td>Seismic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Melford Parish Church</td>
<td>586492246766</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battisford 1</td>
<td>604585254282</td>
<td>1000m</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battisford Parish Church</td>
<td>605494254371</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 5

BALSHAM

First Edition OS map 1886. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between Nine Chimney House and the parish church of The Holy Trinity.
First Edition OS map 1885. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between Manor House and the parish church of St Mary’s.
First Edition OS map 1884 (Northern section) and 1889 (southern section). 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between Manor Farm and the parish church of St Dunstan’s.
BOTTISHAM

First Edition OS map 1891. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between Bottisham Place and the parish church of Holy Trinity.
BURWELL

First Edition OS map 1890. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between no. 20 High Street and the parish church of St Mary’s.
BURWELL

First Edition OS map 1890. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between 127a North Street and the parish church of St Mary’s.
COTTENHAM

First Edition OS map 1887. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red lines indicate spatial relationship between 7 High Street and the parish church of All Saint’s; 333 High Street and the parish church; and 60 Denmark Street and the parish church.
FEN DITTON

First Edition OS map 1889. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red lines indicate the spatial relationship between Home Farm, 25 High Ditch Road and the parish church of St Mary’s; and 22 High Ditch Road, and the parish church.
GODMANCHESTER

First Edition OS map 1886. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between no.s 11 and 12 The Causeway, and the parish church of St Mary’s.
METFIELD

First Edition OS map 1891. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between Huntsman and Hounds Cottage and the parish church of St John’s.
First Edition OS map 1889. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between Christi Cottage and the parish church of St Mary’s.
REACH

First Edition OS map 1890. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red line indicates the spatial relationship between White Roses and the parish church of Holy Trinity.
SWAFFHAM BULBECK

First Edition OS map 1890. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red lines indicate the spatial relationship between Lordship Cottage and the parish church of St Mary’s; 85 High Street and the parish church; and Priest’s house and the parish church.
WATERBEACH

First Edition OS map 1890. 6” to 1 mile. Not to scale.

Red lines indicate the spatial relationship between The Hall and the parish church of St John’s; and 19 Greenside, and the parish church.
APPENDIX 6

This brick was found in the window jamb of an undisclosed seventeenth-century house in Norfolk during repairs. Its symbol suggests apotropaic practise to prevent the ingress of the devil, and witches, via the windows.
APPENDIX 7

These photographs illustrate a similar form of text to that illustrated in the chapter on Graffiti. Whilst it cannot be categorically claimed that the carving was therefore created in the mid seventeenth century, the possibility is clear.

WK 1686

TW 1631
Though the reverse of the letter ‘W’ its formation is nevertheless similar.

Juliet Fleming noted that writing on walls was widely practised in Elizabethan and Jacobean times.\footnote{J. Fleming, \textit{Graffiti and the Writing Arts in Early modern England} (London, 2001), p.29.} Certainly, much of the graffiti at the eastern end of the cathedral follows the general form of letters illustrated above, which supports both Fleming’s contention, and my suggestion that the ‘WE’ dates from the mid seventeenth century.
APPENDIX 8

Cottenham prophecies from the 1620s.

Cambridgeshire CRO, P/50/1/3.

There was a proliferation of cheap printed prophecies during the seventeenth century,¹ though far fewer handwritten and stitched into parish registers.

¹ [http://www.18thcenturyculture.wordpress.com](http://www.18thcenturyculture.wordpress.com)
PRIMARY WORKS

Manuscripts

British Library, Harleian MS 589, fol.139.

Cambridgeshire CRO, P/13/1/1 Bottisham parish register. Rycharde Hassell’s baptism record.

Cambridgeshire CRO, Q/SO2 Quarter Sessions.

Cambridgeshire CRO, Balsham Parish Register, 1558-1812. Spool no. 1040403. Lawrence Hassell’s baptism, John Hassell’s and Ellen Lawrence’s marriage and Thomas Lawrence’s burial records.

Cambridgeshire CRO, P/50/1/1 Cottenham parish register, 1572-1641. Spool no. 1040454. Mercie, Thomas and Sarah Dowsing’s baptism records.

Cambridgeshire CRO, VC29: 139 1661 CW. Thomas Dowsing’s will, 1648.

Cambridgeshire CRO, P/50/1/3. Cottenham prophecies.

Cambridgeshire CRO, Ely Bonds and Inventories. Spool no. 2301111; 437. Various, including Robert Starr’s will, proved April 9, 1662.

Cambridgeshire CRO, Ely Bonds and Inventories. Spool no. 2301112. Inventories of Thomas Soame, February 13, 1670; George Swann, December 13, 1670; Richard Mansfield, January 11, 1671; John Manby, April 17, 1671; William Barnes, September 21, 1671.

Cambridgeshire CRO, E. Leedham-Green and R. Rodd (eds), Index of the Probate Records of the Consistory Court of Ely, 1449-1858. Part II, F-P.

Corpus Christie College, University of Cambridge, CCCC09/08/211 (former reference: IX 11.q).

The National Archives, PROB 11/54/371. John Hassell’s will, 1572.

The National Archives, PROB 11/135/231. Richard Hassell’s will, 1618.


Indentures and correspondence found in a metal chest in a cupboard in a room on the ground floor of Bottisham 1.


A. Boorde, *The Boke for to Lerne a Man to be Wyse in Buyldyng of his Howse for the Helth of Body and to Holde Quyetness for the Helth of His Soule and Body* (London, 1550).


J. Butler, *Christologia or, a Brief (but True) Account of the Certain Year, Moneth, Day and Minute of the Birth of Jesus Christ* (London, 1671).


B. Castiglione, *The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio Divided into Foure Bookes. Very Necessary and Profitable for Yonge Gentilmen and Gentilwomen Abiding in Court, Palaice or Place* (London, 1561).

J. Cleland *Hero-Paideia: or the Institution of a Young Nobleman* (Oxford, 1607).


N. Culpeper, *Pharmocopeia Londoniensis or, the London Dispensatory* (London, 1661).

D. Defoe, *System of Magick; or a History of the Black Art: Being an Historical Account of Mankind’s Most Early Dealing with the Devil; and How the Acquaintance of Both Sides Began* (London, 1727).

D. Erasmus’ *The Civilitie of Childehode with the Discipline and Institucion of Children* (no place, 1560).

J. Foxe, *Acts and Monuments of These Latter and Perilous Dayes Touching Matters of the Church Wherein ar Comprehended and Described the Great Persecutions and Horrible Troubles that have been Wrought and Practiced by the Romishe Prelates* (London, 1563).


F.M van Helmont, *The Paradoxal Discourses of F.M. van Helmont Concerning the Macrocosme and Microcosme or the Greater and Lesser World and the Union* (London, 1685).


G. Ironside, *Seven Questions of the Sabbath Briefly Disputed After the Manner of the Schooles etc.* (Oxford, 1637).

James I, *Daemonologie* (1597; Gloucester, 2008).

S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: in Which the Words are Deduced from their Originals* (London, 1755).


J. Swift, *Volume X of the Author’s Works: Containing Sermons on Several Subjects and Other Pieces on Different Occasions* (Dublin, 1762).

T. Tenison, *Of Idolatry: A Discourse in which is Endeavoured a Declaration of its Distinction from Superstition* (London, 1678).


SECONDARY WORKS

Books


N.W. Alcock and L. Hall *Fixtures and Fittings in Dated Houses 1567-1763* (York, 1994).


M. Draco and P. Harriss, *Root and Branch: British Magical Tree Lore* (London, 2002).


H. Glassie, Folk Housing in Middle Virginia: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts (Knoxville, 1975).

B. Googe, in R.T. Hampson, Medii Aevi Kalendarium I or Dates, Charters and Customs of the Middle Ages (London, 1841).


J. Grenville, Medieval Housing (London, 1997).


E. Hailstone, The History and Antiquities of Bottisham (Cambridge, 1873).

L. Hall, and N.W. Alcock, Fixtures and Fitting in Dated Houses 1567 – 1763 (York, 1994).


L. Hall, Period House Fixtures and Fittings, 1300-1900 (Newbury, 2005).


R.T. Hampson, Medii Aevi Kalendarium: or Dates, Charters and Customs of the Middle Ages (London, 1841).

M. Haren and Y. de Pontfarcy (eds), The Medieval Pilgrimage to St. Patrick’s Purgatory, Lough Derg and the European Tradition (Monaghan, 1988).


J. Hastings (ed.), Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, III and IV (Edinburgh, 1913).


W. Hillier and J. Hanson The Social Logic of Space (Cambridge, 1984).


M. Parker, *All My Worldly Goods, II* (St Albans, 2004).


C. Richardson, *Domestic Life and Domestic Tragedy in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006).


H. Robinson, *The Zurich Letters, Comprising the Correspondence of Several English Bishops and Others, with Some of the Helvetian Reformers, During the Early Part of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge, 1842).


B. Rudofsky, *Prodigious Builders. Notes Towards a Natural History of Architecture, with Special Regard to those Species that are Traditionally Neglected or Downright Ignored* (London, 1977).


R W. Scribner, ‘Cosmic order and daily life. Sacred and secular in pre-industrial
German society’, in Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany

E. Shagan (ed.), Catholics and the Protestant Nation: Religion, Politics and Identity in
Early Modern England (Manchester, 2009).

J.A. Sharpe, ‘Disruption in the well-ordered household: age, authority and possessed
young people’, in P. Griffiths, A. Fox and S. Hindle (eds), The Experience of Authority

J.A. Sharpe, ‘The devil in East Anglia: the Matthew Hopkins trials reconsidered’, in J.
Barry, M. Hester and G. Roberts (eds), Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in


D.R. Smith, Masks of Wedlock – Seventeenth-Century Dutch Marriage Portraiture
(1978; Epping, 1982).

F. Smith Fussner, The Historical Revolution. English Historical Writing and Thought


Spinoza, Tractatus Theologico - Politicus, 5. Translated by R.H.M. Elwes (New York,
1951).

S.D.T. Spittle (ed.), An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the County of Cambridge

J. Spraggon, Puritan Iconoclasm during the English Civil War (Woodbridge, 2003).


F.W. Steer (ed.), *Farm and Cottage Inventories of Mid-Essex, 1635-1749* (Colchester, 1950).


T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth, 1963).


G. White, The *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne in the County of Southampton* (London, 1789).


SECONDARY WORKS

Journals


Unpublished books / theses / papers / correspondence


L. Hall, ‘15 Horse Street, Chipping Sodbury, South Gloucestershire’ (unpublished, 2009).


B. Kirby, in discussion during the workshop ‘Religious materialities. Exploring the role of material culture in religious mediation in religious materialities’. One day seminar (Cambridge, May 4, 2013).


C. Mackie, in discussion during the ‘Buildings in society international’ conference (Belfast, June 19-21, 2014).


Correspondence between the current owners of Wetherden 1 and T.H.S. Duke at the College of Arms, March 16, 2011.

Correspondence between the current owners of Long Melford 1 and Leigh Alston, March 2006.
INTERNET

http://www.18thcenturyculture.wordpress.com
http://www.apotropaios.co.uk
http://www.bbc.co.uk/countryfile
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-16801512
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-11400041
http://www.exlibris.org/nonconform/engdis/familists.html
http://www.mernick.org.uk/bexley/article3.htm
http://www.plainbacks.com/index%20for%20P.html
http://www.timeanddate.com
http://www.treesforlife.org.uk.
http://www.vam.ac.uk.
http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk.
http://www.williamdowsing.org.uk
RADIO AND TELEVISION

