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*Published in:*  
Norfolk Archaeology

*Publication date:*  
2005

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Stoker, D. (2005). 'Francis Blomefield as a historian of Norwich. *Norfolk Archaeology*, 54, 387-405.

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# **Francis Blomefield as a historian of Norwich**

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This is the second of two papers seeking to examine the credentials of Francis Blomefield as the historian of the county of Norfolk. The first article sought to identify Blomefield's contribution to the published history and analysed his approach to dealing with the rural areas and market towns of the county. This article will look at Blomefield's approach to the history of Norwich, and answer the question as to whether Blomefield was a historian, an antiquary or a topographer.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Eighteenth century Norwich was "one of a small group of English towns whose size, sophistication, and influence beyond their boundaries set them apart from other urban communities".<sup>1</sup> It was the undisputed commercial, social, administrative, and ecclesiastical capital of the wealthy East Anglian region, and until overtaken by Bristol in the 1760s, England's largest provincial city. Francis Blomefield's always realised that he would have to treat the city in a different way from any other place in Norfolk, not least because it was administratively both a city and county, and so could not be treated within the existing structure of hundreds. However, it is questionable whether at the outset he envisaged the nine hundred folio pages which eventually comprised his work. His account of Norwich was vastly superior to any contemporary treatment of an urban area within a county history and is comparable with the most comprehensive urban histories of the eighteenth century. Had the author only published a history of Norwich, his reputation as an urban historian would have been secure.

As with his account of Norfolk, Blomefield was by no means the first in his field and had several recent models to base his own work upon. John Stow's *Survey of London*, originally published in 1598, had been enlarged by John Strype in 1720.<sup>2</sup> Richard Izacke's account of the antiquities of Exeter published in 1677 had been republished by his son Samuel in 1723, and Ralph Thoresby topography of Leeds appeared in 1715.<sup>3</sup> As Blomefield was working on his first volume Francis Drake and Henry Bourne published accounts of York and Newcastle respectively.<sup>4</sup> There had also been several printed histories of Norwich, available from the early-eighteenth century, such as *A short history of the City of Norwich*, in 1706, or William Chase's *Compleat history of the famous city of Norwich* of 1728, but these were small works

of little merit. They provided little more than a catalogue of the mayors, sheriffs, and bishops, together with a crude chronology of notable local events.<sup>5</sup>

Blomefield's account of Norwich was to be on a larger scale than any urban history published to date, and his decision to concentrate on the city had far-reaching effects on his publishing programme for the county as a whole. It necessitated a delay of more than a year before he started publishing volume 2 in April 1741, occasioned by the need to carry out the detailed research necessary for the city. It set also back his programme for covering the remaining four-fifths of the county and re-inforced the unrealistically detailed standards of his first few hundreds. Yet the decision also strengthened his financial position as he simultaneously published it as the second volume of his history of Norfolk for his existing subscribers, and as an independent history of Norwich for a entirely new group.<sup>6</sup>

Blomefield saw his account of Norwich as the centre piece of his history of Norfolk; comprising the second of the three volumes which he then intended to publish,<sup>7</sup> and fulfilling a number of important functions in addition to being a topographical history of the city. It also had to be able to stand alone as an independent publication with a separate readership. No doubt its character was influenced by the decision to publish it simultaneously as a discrete work, although the requirements the history of Norfolk usually took precedence over those of new group of subscribers.<sup>8</sup> However, in spite of all the radical differences between the account of Norwich and the remainder of his work; once it was completed, Blomefield again settled in to his previous pattern of working through the rural areas hundred by hundred, exactly as if nothing had happened in the seven intervening years.

## **SOURCES**

Like the remainder of his history, Blomefield's account of Norwich was compiled from both original and secondary sources. Nearly half the work consists of topographical accounts of the of the city parishes primarily written from his own notes and supplemented from testamentary records. Most of the information for the remainder was culled from the systematic searching by Blomefield of the municipal and cathedral archives. There were also far more references to the city in print than for the country areas, and so Blomefield was able to refer to a wide range of published chronicles and histories of England as well as the more detailed coverage in Edmund Gibson's edition of Camden's *Britannia*.<sup>9</sup>

Two printed sources from the sixteenth century and gave eyewitness accounts of events in the city. The first of these was Alexander Neville's description of Kett's Rebellion - *De furoribus Norfolciensium*.<sup>10</sup> Neville had been secretary to Archbishop Parker (who once preached before the rebels on Mousehold Heath) and wrote his book from his master's recollections. The second work was Thomas Churchyard's vivid account of the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Norwich and the elaborate entertainments arranged for her benefit.<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, these two events were afforded detailed coverage, solely because of the quality of these sources. From the seventeenth century, there were two useful printed surveys of the monuments and tombs in Norwich Cathedral. John Weever's, *Ancient funerall monuments*, (1631) devoted a large section to the cathedral, recording many monuments which were later desecrated in 1643/4.<sup>12</sup> After the Restoration, the physician Thomas Browne carried out another survey 1660 and 1680, although it was not published until 1712.<sup>13</sup>

There were also substantial secondary materials in manuscript form. Peter Le Neve's collections for Norwich were not as detailed as those for other parts of the county, but a number of other antiquaries had interested themselves in the city. By the time Blomefield came to write his account, Benjamin Mackerell's detailed history of the city was complete and advertised by his executors as being ready for the press.<sup>14</sup> However, although Mackerell's history seems to have attracted too few subscribers to be worth publishing, Blomefield was nevertheless denied access to it. Likewise the dispute between the two men also prevented Blomefield from using Mackerell's other manuscript collections relating to the city, such as his 'Account of the monumental inscriptions and fenestral and other arms' in the parish churches, which had been compiled about 1723.<sup>15</sup>

Even more significant research into the history of Norwich had been undertaken by the antiquary and draughtsman John Kirkpatrick before his death in 1728. Kirkpatrick's manuscripts, drawings, and collection of coins were left to his brother Thomas for the duration of his life and thence to the city. Although no work of John Kirkpatrick's was published within a century of his death, he was known to have completed a number of a detailed and scholarly treatises on different aspects of the history of the city, as well as having compiled a mass of antiquarian notes. Blomefield implied that he had access to these collections, in the announcements for his own work, although it is clear that the greater part of the collection was not available to him. Thus the accounts of the mendicant religious orders, the hospitals, the castle, and the city fortifications compiled by John Kirkpatrick were

greatly superior to those subsequently published by Blomefield.<sup>16</sup> Other topics covered in the older man's notes, such as land tenure in the city, merchants marks, and the ground plans of parish churches, were not even dealt with in Blomefield's history.

Blomefield's claims arose because John Kirkpatrick and Peter Le Neve used to exchange their rough notes once they had been transcribed, and so he found himself in possession of a lot of Kirkpatrick's undigested work in the body of the Le Neve collection. This probably took the form of short references to specific items in some of the major series of Norwich records, such as the Consistory Court wills, or the Mayor's Court books. As Blomefield later worked through these sources on his own account, it is impossible to assess how much help he received from this limited access to Kirkpatrick's researches. He no doubt realised that he had only a small part of Kirkpatrick's work, but nevertheless found it convenient to trade on the antiquary's reputation in the city.

Shortly after Blomefield's advertisements for his second volume appeared in the Norwich papers, Thomas Kirkpatrick publicly denied that Blomefield had any access to his brother's collections, in an open letter published in the Norwich newspapers, and announced their forthcoming publication.<sup>17</sup> Blomefield's published reply explained the particular circumstances of his access, and no further word on the matter was heard from Thomas Kirkpatrick.<sup>18</sup> As with the Mackerell family, there is no evidence that Thomas Kirkpatrick ever got any further than announcing the publication of his brother's work. The manuscripts remained in his custody until his death, and then passed to the ownership of the city, where they were not cared for, and several were subsequently lost. Thus Blomefield was embarking on the publication of a detailed history of Norwich shortly after two other such ventures had been still-born through lack of public support. The ultimate appearance of his volume therefore reflects particularly well on his determination to succeed and not to compromise his plans to commercial pressures.

Just as the announcements about his access to Kirkpatrick's collections were exaggerated, it is also likely that Blomefield's claims for access to Thomas Tanner's collections for Norwich were equally inaccurate. Apart from Tanner's most useful collation of the Institution Books, it is not entirely clear what he had specifically relating to the city of Norwich, as opposed to the diocese, and in any event his manuscript collections had by then been passed to the Bodleian Library. Possibly Blomefield had rough notes or transcribed references from some

of Tanner's documents in his custody, but again it probably a case where the reputation of the antiquary was of more use than his available collections.

The majority of materials used in this work therefore came from primary sources, almost all of which were housed in the Cathedral and the Guildhall muniment rooms. For the first time in his historical researches, the author enjoyed the benefits of having virtually all of his materials close at hand, and so long as he maintained a house in Norwich, the problems of distance were no longer relevant. The City records consisted of thousands of rolls, deeds, and bound books relating to the government, administration, and political representation of the city; the tenure of property within its boundaries, its judicial and managerial functions, and the administration of charitable trusts; dating from the middle of the thirteenth century. Also included were twenty-eight grants of royal letters patent, and twenty-five royal charters between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>19</sup> The documents were housed in a small and inconvenient room in the Guildhall, but were otherwise well preserved. Blomefield was clearly granted full access to virtually the whole range and was even permitted to remove certain less valuable items.<sup>20</sup>

Two categories of record were housed in the cathedral: those relating to the administration and properties of the foundation were the responsibility of the dean, whereas those relating to the spiritual direction of the diocese were kept by the chancellor on behalf of the bishop. The first category contained many thousands of documents - including hundreds of charters - dating from the Norman foundation of the cathedral priory and the subsequent re-foundation with a dean & chapter during the reign of Henry VIII. After years of neglect during the seventeenth century, the arrangement and housing of these records was thoroughly overhauled by Humphrey Prideaux who was dean between 1702 and 1724.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, the bishop's records - including the diocesan Institution Books - had benefited from having been in the custody of Thomas Tanner, the Chancellor for thirty years prior to 1732. In both cases Blomefield was given good access to all but the most recent records, and his mark appears on most of the major series of documents.

The labour of systematically working through tens of thousands of documents was enormous and could only be undertaken by Blomefield when his press lay idle. This was almost certainly the cause of the fifteen month hiatus before the publication of the first number of the second volume. This enforced break from the pressures of maintaining a publication schedule was no bad thing for it gave him the opportunity of planning his approach more thoroughly

than was his normal practice. As a result there are some fundamental differences between Blomefield's treatment of the city compared with any other place, and it is noteworthy that his arrangement of the text accorded closely with the source materials available to him and the ways in which they were organised.

## **TREATMENT**

The most obvious difference in the account of Norwich, compared with the remainder of the work is the better organisation and more rigid structuring. The work is divided into three independent sections covering different aspects of the history of the city and the diocese, each of which comes from a different historical tradition. The first of these was a chronological account of the city from the earliest times to the date he was writing, and falls within the 'chronicling tradition'. Blomefield's friend Francis Peck had published similar antiquarian annals of Stamford in 1727, although they had finished with the reign of Henry VI in 1461.<sup>22</sup> There follows a biographical account of the bishopric, including detailed biographies of the bishops, and shorter accounts of various other officials connected with the diocese or the cathedral, modelled on works such as Anthony Wood's *Athenae Oxonienses*.<sup>23</sup> The third, and largest, section is a topographical survey of the city, primarily in terms of the history of its parish churches and other religious institutions, beginning with the cathedral and its precinct, and then progressing through the twelve wards of the city and six extramural parishes. The model for this section was Stow's *Survey of London*.

The second important difference in the treatment of Norwich compared with the remainder of Norfolk was the absence of the author's usual pre-occupation with the ownership of property. The only major category of municipal record which Blomefield overlooked, or perhaps deliberately ignored, was the series of more than ninety Court Rolls representing the enrolment of tens of thousands of deeds in the city court, the vast majority of which related to the transfer of property. This omission was in part a practical necessity, for whereas the manor in the village provided a manageable and easily recognisable unit, the pattern of land ownership in the city was infinitely smaller, more complex, and varied, and would have taken years to unravel.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore there was not the same association between family histories of the gentry and property ownership within the city. Once a family became successful, it was often their ambition to acquire an estate in the country rather than invest their wealth in city properties.

Yet for all the fundamental differences in construction and scale, Blomefield's *Norwich* does have some similarities with his account of Thetford. Just as he found himself obliged to include a certain amount of the pre-Norman history of Norfolk and the East Anglian region within his account of the capital city at this time, so he faced the same problem on a larger scale for Norwich during the mediaeval and early modern periods.<sup>25</sup> The bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries had jurisdiction and influence throughout the diocese, yet it was necessary to account for them in this entry. This even applied to men such as the archdeacons of Suffolk and Sudbury who had little connection with either the city, or Norfolk county, as opposed to the diocese of Norwich. Hence the work was more than a history of the city and its cathedral, but also filled a subsidiary role of providing background information for the remainder of the county history, and also to a certain extent as the history of the whole Norwich diocese.<sup>26</sup>

#### **THE CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF NORWICH**

Although the first section of this work is essentially a chronology, it is nevertheless the most complex. It deals also with the interaction between the people of Norwich and those of the surrounding countryside, the nation as a whole, and particularly with the inhabitants of the cathedral and its precinct in their midst. This is more than purely an administrative and political history and it touches on economic, social, religious, legal, and demographic matters in a desultory manner. It also includes a number of short biographies of notable individuals - such as John Bale or John Caius - who did not qualify for inclusion elsewhere in the work. Brief mention is likewise made throughout of unusual natural occurrences such as earthquakes, floods, great frosts, and fires, together with a number of historical tidbits which did not have the remotest connection with the city or county - such as the first use of cannons in England, the date ladies began to ride side-saddle, or the introduction of printing to England. These were not necessarily the topics which most interested the author so much as the things which were often recorded by the early chroniclers for all important cities, and so might be culled from the various printed books at his disposal.

Despite its varied nature, there are a number of themes running through this part of the work which reappear from time to time under slightly different circumstances. Inevitably the most significant theme was the development of the government, rights, and obligations of the citizenry from the origin of the city during the tenth century until the author's own day.

Closely interwoven is the complex story of disputes over rights and privileges between the citizens and the cathedral authorities. Other topics considered a number of times throughout the history were the relations with the Jewish community, the periodic plague epidemics, the suppression of heterodox religious opinions, and detailed accounts of popular rebellions. However, Blomefield did not see it as part of his task to unravel and analyse each of these themes, but rather to consider them in one long chronological narrative.

As with his treatment of Thetford, Blomefield began his history of Norwich at the Roman period, although, like Camden, he had no misconceptions about the existence of the city at this time. He rather wished to enlarge upon that author's attempts at disproving various fables which were still current.<sup>27</sup> He then discussed the nearby Roman remains at Caister St Edmund, but was incorrect in identifying Elmham rather than Caister with the Roman station of Venta Icenorum. In the two succeeding chapters the author examined evidence relating to the Saxon period, largely from inscriptions on contemporary coins minted in the city, and the account of its destruction by the Danish King Sweyn in 1004, recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (where for the first time Norwich is described as a burgh). By the Norman Conquest, Norwich was already a settlement of some importance, and thus Blomefield's transcription and detailed analysis of the entries in Domesday provided sufficient material for the fourth and fifth chapters on the state of the city in the reign of Edward the Confessor and William the Conqueror. Thereafter each reign was given one chapter irrespective of its length or the importance of the events which took place.

The growth in administrative importance of Norwich began during the twelfth century; the result of the desire for autonomy and a developing sense of community by the citizens, seen in the acquisition of Royal Charters. The first of these was in the reign of Henry II and was followed in 1094 by another from Richard I which provided the right of self-government to the citizens. This development was complicated by the transfer of the see to Norwich and the establishment of a cathedral priory thereby giving rise to conflicting authorities in the city. During the next five centuries twenty-five royal charters were granted to the citizens, each of which was either transcribed and translated by Blomefield or at least described in his text; usually with an accompanying explanation of the circumstances which led to their grant. These charters, together with royal letters patent (containing grants, pardons, licences, exemplifications, compositions of disputes etc.) and a host of other contemporary documents chronicled the gradual development of self-government by the citizens. As the inhabitants of

Norwich grew in prosperity, despite many setbacks, so did the extent and complexity of the regulation of their trade and daily lives. This in turn resulted in progressively larger and more detailed records of their government available for study by the historian.

Throughout the Middle Ages the city government had to contend with the conflicting rights and interests of other parties controlling significant areas within the city boundaries, usually as a result of early grants made before the city had achieved full self-government. The exempt jurisdiction of the Castle Fee, governed in the King's name by the sheriff of Norfolk, enabled some citizens to evade the city's own laws and regulations, until it was eventually surrendered by the crown in 1345. However, a far more important problem was caused by the various exempt jurisdictions in the control of the church, and particularly the cathedral priory. The conflict between the rights and jurisdictions of the citizens and those of the prior existed over many centuries and was not totally resolved even after the dissolution of the priory and its replacement by a cathedral chapter in May 1538.

Twice during the thirteenth century this conflict exploded into riot resulting in considerable damage to the cathedral fabric. On the second occasion, in 1272, this occasioned the temporary seizure of the city liberties by the crown and the placing of the city under an interdict until suitable restitution was made. Blomefield briefly explained the background to the dispute in his short account of the first riot in 1234, but had only scanty evidence from a reference in the Crown Pleas.<sup>28</sup> Similarly he could only make cursory reference to a further dispute in 1256 which did not result in a riot, but this time he did not name his source.<sup>29</sup>

For the great riot of 1272 however, he had a number of independent contemporary accounts of the events which enabled him to build up a far more detailed and balanced picture, and demonstrate his skills as a true historian.<sup>30</sup> His most complete source was the chronicle of Bartholomew Cotton, a Norwich monk, who inevitably laid the blame for the riot on the citizens.<sup>31</sup> Realising that this was a partial interpretation which did not cover the events leading up to the riot, Blomefield counterbalanced it by with an account from the 'Liber Albus' in the city archive. These were supplemented by material from the chronicles of Holinshed, Fabian, Matthew Paris, and Matthew of Westminster,<sup>32</sup> as well as references to Speed, Stow, Godwin, and Neville,<sup>33</sup> which had all been derived from these sources. In his final analysis, Blomefield rejected Cotton's interpretation and placed much of the blame on the prior and monks for inciting the populace to rise against them. Thus it is clear that he had

the capacity of looking critically at historical materials and forming his own opinions derived from a collation of information from different sources.

Despite his sophisticated use of the conflicting accounts of the 1272 riot, Blomefield has been accused of credulousness in his acceptance of some historical materials at face value. In some instances such criticisms were based either on later knowledge or alternative sources not available to him. One seemingly obvious case where he lacked historical judgment was his account of the devastating outbreak of bubonic plague in 1349 where he quoted figures of more than 57,000 deaths in the city.<sup>34</sup> His source was a fifteenth century manuscript chronicle preserved in the Norwich 'Book of Pleas',<sup>35</sup> which quotes a slightly larger figure than a number of printed chronicles. However modern knowledge of the epidemiology of this disease and of the probable population of Norwich at this time shows that this is an absurd figure and is perhaps more than twenty times the likely death rate.<sup>36</sup> But Blomefield had neither the experience of witnessing an epidemic of bubonic plague nor had he any alternative information which differed significantly from those sources he chose to use. He therefore had no reason nor capacity to question the frequent claims of a ninety per cent mortality rate with respect to the "great pestilence" of 1349.<sup>37</sup> He realised that there was a problem of reconciling the death rate with the mid-eighteenth century population of Norwich, which he mentions in his text. But rather than question the validity of his sources, he sought to suggest a far greater population of the city in the fourteenth century.

When dealing with other matters Blomefield was not such an impartial historian. On a number of occasions he could not forbear from presenting his readers with his own opinions which went beyond the available evidence. For example, his antagonism to the Jews comes out clearly; he describes how they grew rich through usury, "their consciences being so wide, that they were none at all, so that in the barest pasture in which a Christian would starve, a Jew would grow fat, he bites so close to the ground".<sup>38</sup> Clearly he was not temperamentally qualified to question the fabricated story of St William of Norwich, supposedly martyred by the Jewish Community in 1144, or relate it to a wider pattern of such anti-semitic 'blood libels' throughout Europe.<sup>39</sup>

As a minister of the Church of England, it is not surprising that Blomefield should add his own caustic comments on the state of the contemporary church, in his accounts of the persecution of the Lollards and later Protestant martyrs. However, his main criticisms were levelled at the promoters of rebellion against the crown or lawful government. Blomefield's

readers were left in no doubt as to where he stood in relation to the 'Peasants Revolt', Kett's Rebellion, and the "barbarous" execution of "his most excellent majesty King Charles the first".<sup>40</sup> Participants in other less significant and prolonged insurrections (including some which had no connection with Norfolk) were also censured. His attitude might be expected of an eighteenth century clergyman, although his views were perhaps reinforced by the fact that he was writing at the time of the Jacobite rising in Scotland which soon afterwards threatened the fabric of government and established religion throughout Britain.

The account of Kett's rebellion shows Blomefield as a competent and painstaking eighteenth century historian, but lacking more modern standards of objectivity towards his subject. He based his treatment on his best source - Neville - but supplemented it with material from others such as the works of Holinshed, Heylin, and Fuller,<sup>41</sup> together with various local records. He allowed himself sufficient impartiality to be able to set out, without comment, the grievances of those taking part, but soon afterwards heaped abuse on them for going further than their original intentions, and for "having thoroughly imbibed the wicked notions of the levellers".<sup>42</sup> Thereafter his account is interspersed with derogatory descriptions of the rebels, their deeds and motives; although his comments were no worse nor more frequent than those found in all descriptions of this rebellion.

The historical treatment of Norwich during the Great Civil War presented Blomefield with several problems and resulted in a far less satisfactory and cohesive narrative. Except for the eventful but short-lived rising in the city in 1648 (resulting in the explosion of the city's powder magazine) Norwich saw no military action throughout this period. The only important military events during the war were centred on Kings Lynn and would have been covered by Blomefield there, had he lived to write his account of the town. The story of Norwich during the civil war was of the citizens' reactions to the momentous events taking place elsewhere, coupled with a bitter factional struggle for power within the ruling oligarchy. Such matters were not fully understood by Blomefield nor necessarily considered by him to be a part of a scholarly history. Furthermore the events of this period were only a century past, and to the discomfiture of the historian, the citizens had solidly supported the rebel cause. Thus he had to be cautious in his condemnations of the actions of individuals for fear of upsetting their descendants. He did, however allow himself to make occasional general criticisms of the city government, although for the most part these were directed against the parliament in London.<sup>43</sup>

Nearer his own times, he had also to exercise caution in commenting on individuals or national or local events. He had available more material relating to the day to day running of the city and the work of its governors, and his account gradually changed to become more of a purely administrative history as opposed to the political history which it had in been in part before. A fair proportion of the last few chapters was taken up with detailed descriptions of various local acts of parliament such as those relating to street lighting, the erection of workhouses, or the setting up of a Court of Conscience,<sup>44</sup> but these descriptions were provided at the expense of some necessary background material relating to the political life of the city. For example, a lot of space was devoted to reciting the provisions of a 1729 act for the better regulation of local elections, without mentioning the many malpractices and the long series of disputed elections giving rise to it.<sup>45</sup>

During the last few years of the chronological account most of items covered were fairly mundane or innocuous - such as the acquisition of new civic plate and regalia, and the presentation of portraits of civic dignitaries to public buildings. Elsewhere he included mere curiosities, such as the appearance of a live worm from the vein of a woman who was being bled. During 1740 however there were serious food riots in Norwich and in many towns in the county, which could not easily have been avoided or ignored by the author. They were covered in a rather brief and purely factual manner without his usual condemnations of the participants except in so far that he claimed the riots were "on the pretence of the scarcity and dearness of grain".<sup>46</sup>

As with the rural areas and market towns, Blomefield was not greatly concerned with the economic history of the city.

Blomefield did not treat the flourishing textile trade as a subject in his own right; it was mentioned only incidentally when noteworthy events happened (such as a petition from the manufacturers), which could be summarized in the course of the year-by-year chronicle.<sup>47</sup>

He does refer to specific trades when their members interact with the city authorities. For example, he was the first to identify in print the date of the introduction of the trade of printing to the city by Anthony de Solempne about 1570. Thus by going back to documentary evidence rather than relying on printed accounts, he noted an entry in the register of freemen, and was able to overturn the previously accepted claim of Francis Burges dating from 1701.<sup>48</sup> Blomefield also notes the re-introduction of printing in that year after a substantial discontinuation of the trade.<sup>49</sup>

## **BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNTS**

The biographical accounts of the major diocesan clergy, forming the second of the three sections of the history of Norwich, were fairly straightforward in structure although compiled from an equally diverse range of sources. They also contain a smaller proportion of information directly related to the history of the city than the remainder of the work. Mediaeval bishops and some other church dignitaries played important roles in the government of the realm and spent little time in their dioceses, and one man might be translated from one see to another several times during his career. Inevitably any biographical account would need to refer to events taking place outside the diocese (and even overseas) and recorded in national rather than local records. Secondly, because Blomefield was writing a biographical account of the whole bishopric, these entries were not restricted to the bishops and senior clergy of Norwich. He also included the early bishops of Dunwich, Elmham, and Thetford, the last of which partially overlapped the account of the bishopric in his history of Thetford. Similarly, he included accounts of the archdeacons of Norfolk, Suffolk, and Sudbury, as well as those of Norwich.

The size and content of each episcopal biography varied considerably depending on the period in question, the length of the bishop's term in office, and whether there were notable events during this time. The early bishops of Dunwich, Elmham, and Thetford, who were the predecessors to the bishops of Norwich only warranted short entries, frequently no more than one paragraph, and occasionally only one sentence. On the other hand some of the more colourful mediaeval bishops such as William Bateman or Henry Dispenser were given several pages.<sup>50</sup> The bishops who were in office during the tempestuous years of the seventeenth century - such as Richard Montague, Joseph Hall, and Edward Reynolds - also warranted lengthy accounts.<sup>51</sup>

Blomefield included whatever information he could find about each individual, particularly respecting the early bishops. This might even include evidence of his whereabouts at a given date if he had witnessed a deed or a charter. Where possible, the historian included a brief account of the bishop's parentage and family, his major works and writings, and any benefactions, particularly those respecting the cathedral or the city. He would also mention armorial bearings plus an account of the bishop's tomb or monumental inscription if known. Finally, if he had seen a copy, he would also describe the bishop's seal.

The lives of the early bishops of Norwich were recorded in reference works available to Blomefield, such as Godwin's *De Praesulibus Angliae commentarius*, and Anthony Wood's *Athenae Oxonienses*, which recorded the Oxford scholars among them.<sup>52</sup> Blomefield used both of these sources extensively, both for information and also as a model for his own treatment. However, of more importance were two chronicles compiled by the monks of the cathedral priory. Bartholomew Cotton's 'Historia Anglicana', and a volume of 'Annals of Norwich' (which Blomefield mistakenly ascribed to Cotton) were both composite chronicles representing the work of many hands. The 'Historia' was primarily copied from Geoffrey of Monmouth and Henry Huntingdon, but also contained material from the 'Annals of Norwich' as well as a significant amount of original material relating to the diocese (such as the Prior's dispute and ensuing riot in 1272 mentioned above).<sup>53</sup> The 'Annals of Norwich', continuing after Cotton's death, were based on the work of John of Wallingford, Matthew Paris, and John Tayster of Bury St Edmunds, but also contained original material.<sup>54</sup> These were available to Blomefield as manuscripts in the cathedral and printed in Henry Wharton's *Anglia Sacra*.<sup>55</sup>

However, as with the riot of 1272, Blomefield tended to distrust monastic chronicles unless the information appeared in a number of sources. He was critical of Bartholomew Cotton as the author of either the 'Historia' or the 'Annals of Norwich' for giving Bishop Herbert de Losinga an unblemished character and making excuses for his simony, or for giving no account of the life of Henry Dispenser because he had been in contention with his prior and the monks of the cathedral.<sup>56</sup> Blomefield therefore went to considerable pains to supplement his accounts of the lives of bishops with material from as many sources as possible. His footnotes demonstrate a remarkable range of background reading, although some of the references were taken straight from secondary sources such as Godwin. Blomefield cited most of the mediaeval and early modern chronicles and relevant works of historical scholarship published until his own time. These were supplemented by references in national and other records gleaned from Le Neve's collections, and to the cathedral muniments, such as the extensive series of Bishops' Registers and Institution Books. Blomefield may not have been responsible for much of the information in this remarkable collection of episcopal biographies, he nevertheless contributed a great deal of work collating and supplementing existing accounts.

The second chapter of this section deals with the lives of the priors and other monastic officials, although inevitably in much less detail than the bishops. Frequently Blomefield had

only such evidence for a name as would indicate that he was in office on a particular date, and rarely had he more than a few sentences indicating the man's origin, the date of his death, and any benefactions he may have made to the cathedral. Even the last prior, William Castleton, who presided during the dissolution of his monastery, only warranted two brief paragraphs as he had fully co-operated with the king's design and was consequently appointed as the first dean.<sup>57</sup>

The accounts of the various monastic officials, such as the sacrist, cellarer, chamberlain, almoner. etc., took the form of a few paragraphs describing the function of the office, followed by an incomplete list of such names and dates as could be identified. The author was faced with the problem of how he should deal with the office holders of the various priory cells at Lynn, Yarmouth, North Elmham, St Leonards, Hoxne, and Aldby; who were both connected with the cathedral and with the localities in which they worked. In the end he decided to deal with the priors of each cell together with the account of that cell, in the entries for the towns and villages in which they were situated. The one exception was Hoxne, which was in Suffolk and so would not warrant an entry elsewhere in his history. Therefore Blomefield inserted a rather anomalous brief account of the Hoxne cell, its various benefactors, and its priors.<sup>58</sup> As he never lived to complete the remaining accounts, his work therefore presents a misleading picture of the work of the cathedral and its cells.

Finally, Blomefield gave a brief account of ten notable monks at the cathedral, and went on to comment just how few remarkable men came from this monastery compared with the other religious houses in the city. From this he deduced that the monks were

a more lazy sort of people than the friars ...who had large revenues to subsist on, and little or nothing to do, glutted with ease and plenty, thought of little else but enjoying those good things that their predecessors had given them, or that their poor vicars and substitutes, the secular clergy, (which they laid their whole burthen,) daily earned for them.<sup>59</sup>

Following the dissolution of the cathedral priory, the offices of prior and his officials were translated into those of dean and the prebends. The biographies of these men were therefore provided in a succeeding chapter, together with those of the four archdeacons and their officials from the time of the original Norman foundation. The twenty deans who had served up to Blomefield's day were given biographies second only in length and detail to those of the major bishops, frequently including accounts of their funeral monuments if they were preserved in the cathedral. Some of these men had served in this office before moving on to

more illustrious preferments in the church, and so it was no difficult matter to find details of their lives. On the other hand the archdeacons received somewhat shorter treatment and the accounts of the prebends and other minor officials were little more than lists of names.

Inevitably there was a certain amount of overlapping between the subjects covered in each of the three sections of the history of Norwich. Thus Blomefield wrote at length about Henry Dispenser both in his account of the Peasants' Revolt and in the bishop's own biography. Similarly he wrote about a number of early bishops in the third section in the context of their additions to the fabric of the cathedral. This did not result in the duplication of information so much as the separation of related material, such as the inclusion of the scholarships belonging to the Norwich school in the biography of their benefactor, Matthew Parker, in the first section of the history, rather than with the description of the school itself in the third. Similarly the funeral monuments of the bishops and deans who were buried in the cathedral were described in the second section rather than with the other accounts of monuments. However in most instances this did not matter greatly because Blomefield usually made sufficient cross-references.

### **THE TOPOGRAPHICAL HISTORY OF NORWICH**

The third section was the topographical history of Norwich. It was both the largest part - constituting about one half of the total length - and the most straightforward. The bulk of it consisted of descriptions of churches and related institutions according to a similar pattern to those elsewhere in the history of Norfolk. Blomefield began with a description of the cathedral and its precinct and then moved to the city at large, working from ward to ward, describing the notable features of each parish in turn. Outside the cathedral precinct, he began to number his accounts of buildings and institutions as a key to a plan of the city which he hoped to include with his work. He eventually reached 139 items before moving to the parishes outside the wall, but this figure is meaningless as an indication of the depth of coverage of the city because a description might vary from a single sentence to forty folio pages. It could also be misleading where more than one institution may have used the same building over the centuries - such as St Andrew's Hall - for all such were represented by a single number.

Not all these accounts were of religious institutions and buildings; Blomefield also mentions the Guildhall, the city gaol, the gatehouses, and briefly the old shire house and the castle. The

latter was given a surprisingly brief entry compared with its historical importance and the available source materials.<sup>60</sup> This may have been a reflection of his lack of interest in architectural antiquities, or because the castle was technically separate from the city, although such administrative niceties did not prevent him from dealing with the various cells of the cathedral in this volume. The historian also gave a fairly detailed account of the market place, although primarily in historical terms rather respecting the produce sold there every week. However, the vast majority of the entries for which he gave considerable detail were either parish churches or else foundations which were in some way connected with the church.

Naturally he began with the largest and most important building in the city - Norwich Cathedral. Like many of his descriptions of buildings, Blomefield's account deals primarily with the historical aspects - such as who built what, or when the spire fell down - at the expense of any full architectural description. Wherever there were inscriptions or armorial bearings represented either on monuments or as part of the fabric, these were recorded, but there is no mention of the magnificent flying buttresses. He clearly assumed that his readers would know the cathedral well, speaking of "that magnificence we now see it in",<sup>61</sup> and supposing that further elaboration was superfluous. The account was supplemented by the engraved ichnography of the cathedral donated by the members of the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>62</sup> Blomefield did not therefore have to describe where one part of the building lay in relation to the others, and adapted his account so that it should be used in conjunction with this diagram. He also wanted the ichnography to act as a location key to the monuments and therefore included too much detail at the expense of clarity.

For each chapel or part of the cathedral, Blomefield noted its foundation and subsequent uses, together with any early references to its existence. He then gave an account of notable burials, and monuments using his own observations for surviving monuments, and the works of John Weever and Thomas Browne for those defaced during the Civil War period.<sup>63</sup>

Blomefield might also expound on the significance of images or of various customs and ceremonies which took place, such as his explanation of the the rood loft in St Mary's Chapel, or his account of the boy bishops.<sup>64</sup> However the most interesting and useful descriptions were of those parts of the cathedral which no longer existed. Thus the ruined chapel of St Mary the Great, at the eastern end, was described in more detail (including dimensions) than some surviving chapels. Included in this entry was a list of the depredations of Dean Gardiner who caused the demolition and whose earlier biography had made no mention of such

actions.<sup>65</sup> Similarly Blomefield's description of the layout and furnishings in the Green Yard, where regular Combination Sermons were preached in front of civic dignitaries during the early seventeenth century, gives an insight into an important feature of Norwich life at this time.<sup>66</sup>

In the Cathedral Precinct, or Close, the author gave an account of the Bishop's chapel which had been stripped of its furnishings and left to ruin during the Civil War, the former church of St Mary in the Marsh which had been converted to a dwelling house in the late sixteenth century, and St Ethelbert's parochial chapel which had been destroyed in the riot of 1272 and subsequently replaced by a small chapel over St Ethelbert's Gate.<sup>67</sup> He also described the Bishop's Palace, the former chapel house which served as the grammar school, and gave a brief account of the Deanery of which held ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the city, under the Norwich Archdeaconry, until the Reformation.<sup>68</sup>

Having finished with the cathedral and precinct, Blomefield set out his plan for dealing with the city in general, stating that he would "follow its ancient division into four great or capital wards, and their subdivision into twelve small or petty wards."<sup>69</sup> Each of the small wards contained between one and six parishes, which varied at different periods. Thus the Great Ward of Conesford was divided into the small wards of North Conesford, South Conesford, and Berstreet, which had at some time encompassed eighteen parochial churches and chapels. On the other hand the Great Ward of Mancroft included only the three large parishes of St Stephen, St Peter, and St Giles, each of which was a small ward in its own right. Thus the space devoted to the account of any parish might vary a great deal according to its place within the administrative structure of the city.

Blomefield's account of the large parish of St Peter Mancroft encompasses most of the elements appearing elsewhere in the city, although it lacked any monastic institution. It begins with an account of the emergence of the parish which had been almost uninhabited at the time of Domesday but which later grew to be the most prosperous in the city. There followed a list of the incumbents from 1300. This was complicated because the advowson of the rectory was in the possession of the Dean and Chapter of the College of St Mary-in-the-fields, who merely appointed a parish chaplain and kept the profits from the living. This situation remained following the Reformation and the early seventeenth century church was served by an upper minister or parish chaplain, and an assistant minister, who were assisted from 1680 by a reader. Blomefield then set out the names and stipends of the parish clerk,

sexton, steepler, organist, and the bellows blower for the organ, in an unusually detailed paragraph. By his usual standards, the description of the church building was good and befitted its status as the principal parish church in the city. After giving the parishioners' reasons for demolishing their old church in 1390 and building another which was larger and more convenient, he went on to give the major dimensions and details of its fabric.<sup>70</sup> He then described a large number of monuments in the church and its adjoining chapels, the church plate, and a number of chantries which had existed there. Because the church was being rebuilt between 1390 and about 1455 it attracted a large number of bequests in the wills of its parishioners, the majority of which were detailed by Blomefield with other notes of burials from about 1311 to the early Elizabethan period.<sup>71</sup>

The biographies of two of the most notable inhabitants of this parish, both of whom were buried in the church, had already been given elsewhere, otherwise they would have been included at this point. Notes on the life of the author and physician Thomas Browne had been given in the first section as part of the account of the visit of King Charles II to the city in 1672 when Browne was knighted.<sup>72</sup> Similarly John Jeffery had not only served as the minister of the church but also as Archdeacon of Norwich and so he had an entry in the second section.<sup>73</sup> In both cases Blomefield merely described the monument and referred his readers elsewhere. However he was able to use this opportunity for giving a long and detailed account of the Briggs family which had close connections with the parish, and of which his friend Henry Briggs was a member. The account of this family included both a genealogical narrative and table, mention of various bequests to the church, and the engraving of the monument of Edmond Hobart financed by Henry Briggs.<sup>74</sup>

Having finished with the parish church, the author embarked upon a long account of the layout of the Market Place and its various subsidiaries, including descriptions of existing buildings and features such as the city gaol, or an engine to weigh hay, as well as mentioning those that had disappeared such as the Jewish synagogues, the Goldsmiths' Hall and the Market Cross. In the midst of this account was a detailed description of the Guildhall, its history, fabric, inscriptions, portraits, and its present use. Finally an account was given of the foundation of, and subsequent bequests to, the Bedlam or Bethel Hospital "for the convenient reception and habitation of lunaticks, and not for natural born fools and ideots".<sup>75</sup>

Blomefield's structure left no room for a contemporary description of the city as a whole, such as had been written by Daniel Defoe or John Evelyn.<sup>76</sup> This was not an essential part of

a scholarly history in the eighteenth century, but nevertheless the author seems to have realised that there was a gap in his account. At the end of his work he therefore added one single paragraph of geographical information, almost as an afterthought.<sup>77</sup> This was purely factual rather than descriptive and encompassed the position of the city, its population, the number of houses and places of worship, and stated that its principal manufacture was worsted stuffs, Norwich damasks, and other woollen goods. However, at the same time the author was preparing another more important method of remedying this gap, by arranging for the publication of a large engraved plan of the city to complement his narrative.<sup>78</sup>

Little information is available concerning the production of the plan, which must have been envisaged at an early stage in his history of Norwich. It was not completed until September 1746, nearly a year after the publication of the text, and was sold to subscribers of the whole work (in both its forms) and also as a separate publication to non-subscribers.<sup>79</sup> It was dedicated to Thomas Gooch, Bishop of Norwich, who presumably met the considerable expense involved in its production. Blomefield is credited on the plan as being both delineator and engraver, although this is most unlikely as he was neither an artist nor a craftsman, and it rather appears to have been the work of the engraver and antiquary George Vertue.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore the survey was largely copied from one published by James Corbridge in 1727.<sup>81</sup> In so far as it clearly features all of the buildings and institutions in the topographical section of the work, together with the names of the main streets and open spaces, the plan provides a worthy accompaniment to the text. The publication of the plan also provided Blomefield with the opportunity of remedying one weakness in his work; the lack of appropriate illustrations. As with his account of Thetford, he came across more than seventy seals, coins, arms, swan marks, and items of civic regalia which he wished to illustrate but which he could neither afford to have engraved nor find subscribers to meet the cost. These were all engraved as a decorative border to the plan, at a fraction of the cost of having them produced separately. Only the name of each item could, however, be included on the plan and so the author used the final chapter of his text to provide fuller captions.

The publication of this fine plan as the culmination of the account of Norwich, probably represents the high point in Blomefield's career, particularly as it came after the years of difficulty and disappointment. However, in 1746 he had only five years of life remaining and was becoming aware of his growing financial difficulties. With hindsight, it is apparent that

the time, trouble and cost lavished by the author on this volume was ultimately at the expense of his coverage of much of the remainder of the county.

Blomefield's *History of Norwich* is one of the best examples of the antiquarian approach to urban history, in terms of the importance of its subject, the range of materials used, and the relative sophistication of the approach. In the decades following Blomefield's death urban historians would adopt a more philosophical approach to their subjects. This is well illustrated by William Richard's approach to the history of King's Lynn, published in 1812.<sup>82</sup>

Richard[s] did not give so much as an extract from the relevant section of Domesday. His interest was not in the descent of property or the complexities of feudal tenure. Instead he discussed the impact of the Conquest upon the different orders of people in King's Lynn.<sup>83</sup>

## **WAS BLOMEFIELD A HISTORIAN?**

As mentioned in the first of these two articles, Walter Rye studiously avoids referring to Blomefield as a historian in his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and rather describes him as a topographer. This is not an accurate description, as Blomefield was not concerned with describing the contemporary state of the landscape or settlements of Norfolk. Blomefield, on the other hand, was a member of the Society of Antiquaries, and might have acknowledged the title 'antiquary', which in his day carried none of the negative connotations that it was to acquire in the succeeding century.<sup>84</sup> Graham Parry describes an antiquary thus:

The type is perhaps easier to describe than to define, for the spread of scholarship they engaged in was so broad and variegated that it defies definition. A concern with origins was certainly one characteristic preoccupation: the origins of nations, languages, religions, customs, institutions and offices.<sup>85</sup>

This is a closer description of Blomefield's activities and pre-occupations, although in his case the wide-ranging energy displayed by a man such as Dugdale had become focussed onto specific topics and principally to one area.<sup>86</sup> Blomefield was always more interested in the past than the present, and in documentary rather than tangible or visible evidence. As with many of contemporary writers of county histories he was concerned with the property and the genealogy of the landed gentry in the rural areas, and with the rights and privileges of the citizens of urban areas. On one occasion he did "sett 3 men to digg" among the ruins of Castleacre Priory for two days in June 1734, although this excursion into field archaeology was untypical.<sup>87</sup> However he was not merely concerned with the origins of his chosen topics, but also with their development until his own time. Thus the only adequate description of his

work is that of a topographical historian, albeit one working in an antiquarian historiographical tradition. It is therefore appropriate that he should be judged in these terms.

The transition from antiquary to historian is apparent in the titles of Blomefield's works. The earliest accounts of counties had used descriptors such as 'Perambulation', 'Chorography', 'Survey', or 'Description'.<sup>88</sup> Dugdale, Thoroton, and Ashmole had compiled the *Antiquities of Warwickshire, Nottinghamshire, and Berkshire*, respectively,<sup>89</sup> Sir Henry Chauncy wrote *The historical antiquities of Hertfordshire*, and Robert Atkyns *The ancient and present state of Glostershire*.<sup>90</sup> Yet when Blomefield published his proposals in July 1733 he chose the relatively novel terminology of "topographical history" of Norfolk.<sup>91</sup> Similarly when decided to republish his accounts of Thetford and Norwich as separate works<sup>92</sup>, he chose the unadorned descriptor of "History" for each town, again following a novel practice for works on this scale. Hitherto a 'history' of a town would have been a slight octavo work of negligible merit. Thus Blomefield's use of the noun 'history' in his titles was quite deliberate, and is a reflection both of the emergence of history as a legitimate field of study during his lifetime, and of his pre-occupation with the historical development of the places he was describing as opposed to describing their origins or contemporary state.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a Historian as,

A writer or author of a history; especially one who produces a work of history in the *higher sense*, as distinguished from the simple annalist or chronicler of events, or the mere compiler of a historical narrative.

Arguably, any treatise dealing with aspects of the past may be described as a work of history – deriving from the Greek word for enquiry. The contemporary pamphlet accounts of Norwich, chronicled events and listed office holders in and other cities, but these were not works of history in the higher sense and few would describe their authors as 'historians'

Blomefield differs from his illustrious predecessors in a number of significant respects. For example, his use and interpretation of different and conflicting accounts of the Norwich riots, his questioning of the figures for plague deaths in 1349 both involved a degree of historical method. Likewise the use of a wide variety of national and local sources when compiling his accounts of parishes, shows a considerable level of sophistication for his time. He was not the "mere compiler" of historical notes, but was rather taking a wide variety of information available to him, collating it and compiling a coherent narrative according to established formulae for rural and urban histories. There are inaccuracies in his work and sometimes one

might question his understanding or conduct, but in these respects he was not fundamentally different from many of his contemporaries in the emerging discipline of history.

... history is after all the reflections of one man or woman working at one point in time on what happened at another point in time, and in considering the result the date at which the history is being written is as much to be taken into account as the date of the events which are being written about.<sup>93</sup>

One undoubted weakness was that Blomefield lacked any overall conception of what he was doing. He had at his disposal enormous collections of materials, but never fully understood the immensity of the task he had undertaken. For example: the basic topographical unit considered by his work was the civil parish. Norfolk contained 756 civil parishes - significantly more than any much larger counties such as the 649 parishes in Lincolnshire and 604 in Yorkshire. Dugdale had to deal with only 565 in Warwickshire and Chauncy 136 in Hertfordshire. Within each of these parishes, he sought to trace the descent of the various manors. Yet the manorial structure of East Anglia was considerably more complex than in other areas of England, where the parish and the manor were largely co-extensive. In Norfolk there would often be two, three, or more even manors within a given parish, greatly multiplying the complexity of his task. Furthermore, Norfolk included Norwich, the largest provincial city in England, and the ports of Lynn and Yarmouth, both of which were within the twenty most populous towns in England. There was the ancient burgh of Thetford, the site of a Saxon cathedral, and the decayed port of Castle Rising – once more prosperous than either Lynn or Yarmouth, and more than thirty market towns. Norfolk would always have been the most difficult English county history to write, even without the additional self-imposed burden of printing and distributing the work.

## **CONCLUSION**

This article and its predecessor have sought to examine Francis Blomefield's work and his credentials as the acknowledged historian of Norfolk and Norwich, two and a half centuries after his death. Blomefield's *History* is not the work of one man, but arose out of the work of many predecessors and contemporaries. It was not without faults and omissions, and has never been satisfactorily completed. Nevertheless, the compilation of such a detailed account of two fifths of the county and the city of Norwich was an enormous achievement given the circumstances and time in which he was working, even though a fair proportion of the material had been assembled by others. However, after seeking, verifying, organising, and

digesting information, the historian has a further and most important duty to perform – that is to publish his or her researches and insights so that a new generation can build upon them. This is Blomefield's greatest contribution.

Writing in 1787 John Fenn made the following complaint with respect to the fate of the manuscript collections of Peter Le Neve and Thomas Martin.

It is a truth greatly to be lamented, that almost all general collectors are too apt to become so very attentive to the *present* pursuit of the day, as to let that engross their whole attention; whereas, would they follow one species of collecting only; and, having acquired a sufficient fund of materials relative to that particular pursuit, then use the same industry in arranging and digesting, those materials, as they before employed merely in collecting them, and when thus put into order, give them to the public, how much good would they do to society, and to themselves; instead of which, as soon as a sufficient quantity of matter is amassed for their originally intended plan, the whole is laid aside, and a new pursuit takes place: thus, wandering from one species of collecting to another, their life wears away; they become old men, and pass to their grave without having benefited their contemporaries by any useful or curious publication; too often, it is to be feared, with ruined, or at least wasted estates, their collections are then dispersed by public sale, perhaps for the same purpose as before collected - *to be looked at, laid aside, and forgotten!*<sup>94</sup>

Norfolk historiography is littered with unfinished projects, unpublished manuscripts, unrealised aims, and men who left it too late, to stop collecting, start writing up their works, and see them through the press. Peter Le Neve is the most obvious candidate, who has left nothing to posterity other than his widely dispersed manuscript collections. Thomas Tanner is now remembered principally because his brother was willing to spend years digesting his notes and publishing his works. The only published work by Thomas Martin was compiled on his behalf and from his notes by Richard Gough. Much of John Kirkpatrick's work has been lost, and the remainder did not appear in print until the nineteenth century. Anthony Norris's detailed accounts of the eastern hundreds lie unpublished in the Norfolk Record Office. Benjamin Mackerell lived just long enough to complete a creditable history of Norwich, but it remains unpublished, whereas his name is now associated with his plagiarised history of Lynn. Francis Blomefield published his materials and faced the criticisms of the public and posterity. *An essay towards a topographical history of Norfolk*, was never properly finished, but "despite its modest title the work remains one of the great county histories and is still the only major history of Norfolk."<sup>95</sup>

23 April 2003

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- <sup>1</sup> Peter Clark and Paul Slack, *English Towns in Transition*, (1976) 46-61.
- <sup>2</sup> John Stow, *A survey of London*, (1598 and 1693), and John Strype, *A survey of the cities of London and Westminster*, (1720).
- <sup>3</sup> Richard Izacke, *Remarkable antiquities of the city of Exeter*, new edition by Samuel Izacke, (1723) and Ralph Thoresby, *Ducatus leodiensis: or, The topography of the ancient and populous town and parish of Leedes*, (1715).
- <sup>4</sup> Francis Drake, *Eboracum, or the history and antiquities of York*, (1736) and Henry Bourne, *The history of Newcastle upon Tyne* (1736).
- <sup>5</sup> Other examples include *A true description of the city of Norwich* (Norwich, 1706 & 1707), *The history of the city of Norwich*, (, 1718), *The records of Norwich*, 2 vols. (1736-37), and Thomas Eldridge, *An authentick history of the ancient city of Norwich*, (Norwich, 1737). For an account of these works see Rosemary Sweet, *The writing of urban histories in eighteenth-century England*, (1997), 91-9.
- <sup>6</sup> The production and distribution of the work is discussed in the introduction to Blomefield, *Correspondence*, 46-55.
- <sup>7</sup> Blomefield advertised that his work would comprise three volumes from June 1738 until the 10<sup>th</sup> part of volume 3 (published early in 1749).
- <sup>8</sup> One example of this was Blomefield's decision to describe the various cells of the Cathedral Priory in Norfolk under each local entry, but the one which was in the county of Suffolk under Norwich.
- <sup>9</sup> William Camden, *Camden's Britannia, newly translated into English, with large additions and improvements by Edmund Gibson*, (1695).
- <sup>10</sup> Alexander Neville, *De furoribus Norfolciensium Ketto duce*, (1575). There were also various English translations published before 1740.
- <sup>11</sup> Thomas Churchyard, *A Discourse of the Queene's Ma'estie's Entertainment in Suffolke and Norffolke* (1578).
- <sup>12</sup> John Weever, *Ancient funerall monuments*, (1631), 787-801.
- <sup>13</sup> Sir Thomas Browne, 'Repertorium: or, some account of the tombs and monuments in the cathedrall church of Norwich, 1680', *Posthumous works*, (1712).
- <sup>14</sup> *Norwich Mercury* 1 April 1738.
- <sup>15</sup> B.L. Add1.Ms.12525.
- <sup>16</sup> These were later published as *The History of the Religious Orders and Communities, and of the Hospitals and Castle of Norwich* (1845).
- <sup>17</sup> *Norwich Gazette* 25 April 1741.
- <sup>18</sup> *Norwich Gazette* 5 May 1741.
- <sup>19</sup> William Hudson & J.C. Tingey *Revised Catalogue of the Records of the City of Norwich*, 2 vols (1898), 3.
- <sup>20</sup> H.L. Bradfer-Lawrence 'The Red Book of Lenn' (*Lynn News and County Press*, 18 and 25 March 1922) quotes a letter from the Norwich town clerk to Charles Parkin enquiring about manuscripts borrowed by Blomefield.
- <sup>21</sup> See P. Musset, 'Norwich Cathedral under Dean Prideaux, 1702-24', in D. Marcombe and C.S. Kingston eds. *Close encounters: English cathedrals and society since 1540*, (1991), 20-23.

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<sup>22</sup> Francis Peck, *Academica tertia Anglicana, or the antiquarian annals of Stamford in Lincolnshire*, (1727). See also Sweet, *The writing of urban histories in eighteenth-century England*, 74-99.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Wood's *Athenae Oxonienses, an exact history of all the writers who have had their education at Oxofrd University*, 2 vols., (1691-2).

<sup>24</sup> John Kirkpatrick had already undertaken such research into tenure of property in Norwich, see the preface (by Dawson Turner) to Kirkpatrick's *History of the religious orders, communities, hospitals, and castle of Norwich*, (1845).

<sup>25</sup> For example, the uprising of 1381 which constituted part of the "Peasant's Revolt" had its origins in Suffolk around Bury St Edmunds, and some of the more important events took place around North Walsham, but for want of a satisfactory alternative place to describe them, they were covered in one single account of the rising under Norwich. Similarly Kett's Rebellion originated at Attleborough and Wymondham and also included separate incidents in the west of the county but was nevertheless described here. Neither of these incidents could strictly be described as Norwich uprisings although their participants directed their attentions to the regional capital.

<sup>26</sup> Blomefield may have been encouraged to expand his original plan to include the history of the diocese, by the terms of Thomas Tanner's will which gave him access to one of his manuscripts on condition that he undertook to complete such a work (letter from John Tanner 31 December 1735, Blomefield, *Correspondence*, 117-8).

<sup>27</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 33...

<sup>29</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 38

<sup>30</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 39-42. The best recent account of the riot is Norman Tanner, 'The Cathedral and the City', in *Norwich Cathedral, church, city and diocese, 1096-1996*, ed. I Atherton et al, (1996), 255-280.

<sup>31</sup> *Bartholomaei de Cotton monachi Norwicensis Historia anglicana, A.D. 449-1298*, edited by Henry Richards Luard, (1859).

<sup>32</sup> Ralph Holinshed, *The Chronicles of Englande, Scotlande, and Irelande* (1577). Robert Fabian *Chronicle*, (1516). Matthew Paris *Historia maior*, (1571) and *Flores historiarum per Matthæum Westmonasteriensem*, (1570).

<sup>33</sup> John Speed, *The History of Great Britaine*, (1611), John Stow, *A Summary of Englysh Chronicles*, (London, 1561), Francis Godwin, *De praesulibus Angliae commentarius* (1616). Alexander Neville, *De furoribus Norfolciensium* (1575).

<sup>34</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 68. Estimates of the population of Norwich at this time vary.

<sup>35</sup> NRO 'Liber placitorum f.110. According to Hudson & Tingey *The Records of the City of Norwich* II. cxxi, this chronicle is part of the Chronicle of Louth Abbey.

<sup>36</sup> J.F.D. Shrewsbury, *A History of the Bubonic Plague in the British Isles*, (1970), 94-9. This was based on earlier estimates of a population of around 1xxx, although recent research by Elizabeth Rutledge has suggested a far larger population of around 25,000 in 1333 ('Immigration and population growth in early fourteenth-century Norwich: evidence from the Tithing Roll', *Urban History Yearbook*, 15 (1988), 27.

<sup>37</sup> Such claims were made by Stow and other chroniclers, but according to Shrewsbury *A History of the Bubonic Plague*, 97, a figure of 57,000 plague deaths in the whole of Norfolk (which then had a population of approximately 245,000) would be more realistic.

<sup>38</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 15.

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- <sup>39</sup> The accusation that William of Norwich had been ritually murdered by the Jewish community was made by Thomas of Monmouth, a monk at Norwich, and was the first of a number of similar accusations throughout Europe. See John McCulloch, 'Jewish ritual murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the early dissemination of the myth', *Speculum*, 72 (1997), 698-740.
- <sup>40</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 77-80, 154-185, 279.
- <sup>41</sup> Holinshead, *The Chronicles of Englande, Scotlande, and Irelande*, Peter Heylin, *Ecclesia restaurata, the history of the Reformation of the Church of England*, (1661), Thomas Fuller, *The Church History of Britain*, (London, 1665).
- <sup>42</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 159.
- <sup>43</sup> Blomefield made stronger criticisms of some of the events of the civil war period in his accounts of Norwich Cathedral and its precinct in the third section of his work, as these had been severely damaged at this time.
- <sup>44</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 301-5.
- <sup>45</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 314-5.
- <sup>46</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 317.
- <sup>47</sup> Sweet, *The writing of urban histories*, (1997), 268. This was in contrast to approach by Blomefield's correspondent Philip Morant, who published an account of Colchester in 1748.
- <sup>48</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 210. Thomas Hearne had previously identified a broadsheet from the press in the Bodleian Library, and Thomas Tanner had found a reference to Solempne's arrival in the city in 1567 in the Diocesan archives, but this information remained unpublished.
- <sup>49</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II, 301.
- <sup>50</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 359-64, & 366.72.
- <sup>51</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 407-10, 410-16, & 416-9.
- <sup>52</sup> Anthony A Wood. *Athenae Oxoniensis*, 2 vols., (1691-2).
- <sup>53</sup> Edgar Graves, *A Bibliography of English History to 1485*, (1975) 416-7.
- <sup>54</sup> Graves, *A Bibliography of English History*, 417
- <sup>55</sup> Henry Wharton, *Anglia Sacra, sive collectio Historiarum de Archiepiscopis et Episcopis Angliae ad annum 1540*. 2v. (1691).
- <sup>56</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 332, & 366.
- <sup>57</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 436.
- <sup>58</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 437-9.
- <sup>59</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 444.
- <sup>60</sup> Blomefield was denied access to John Kirkpatrick's detailed account of the castle, but he did have access to Thornough Gurdon's *An essay on the antiquity of the castle of Norwich*, (1728), which although marred by some fundamental misinterpretations, was a short work of some scholarship.
- <sup>61</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 485.
- <sup>62</sup> 'The ichnography of Norwich Cathedral, drawn by Blomefield, engraved by William Henry Toms. He also included an engraving of 'The seals of Norwich cathedral', subscribed by Thomas Martin..
- <sup>63</sup> Weever, *Ancient funerall monuments*, 787-801, and Browne, 'Repertorium', xxx.
- <sup>64</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 508, & 516.

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- <sup>65</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 489.
- <sup>66</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 503.
- <sup>67</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 521-3, -6, 6.
- <sup>68</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 531-2, & 533-4.
- <sup>69</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 533.
- <sup>70</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 623.
- <sup>71</sup> He also listed other bequests during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from wills and other evidences in the parish chest in another large section dealing with benefactors of the parish.
- <sup>72</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 291.
- <sup>73</sup> F. Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 462.
- <sup>74</sup> ‘Mural monument of Edmond Hobart’, drawn by Francis Blomefield, engraved by William Henry Toms, subscribed by Henry Briggs.
- <sup>75</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 654.
- <sup>76</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the whole island of Great Britain*, 3 vols, (1724-7). Evelyn’s diary was not published until 1818 and would not therefore have been known by Blomefield.
- <sup>77</sup> Blomefield, *An Essay* II. 902.
- <sup>78</sup> ‘A plan of the city of Norwich’, drawn by Francis Blomefield, engraved by George Vertue, dedicated to Thomas Gooch, Bishop of Norwich. See Raymond Frostick, *The printed plans of Norwich 1558-1840*, (2002), 44-7.
- <sup>79</sup> Letter to William Cole, 14 January 1746/7. (Blomefield, *Correspondence*, 243-4). It was sold for 2/6 to subscribers and for 5/- with the references added.
- <sup>80</sup> Letter to William Cole. 10 March 1746, . (Blomefield, *Correspondence*, 242-3).
- <sup>81</sup> Thomas Chubb, *A Descriptive List of the Printed Maps of Norfolk 1574-1916 ... and a Descriptive List of Norwich Plans 1541-1916*, (1928), 210.
- <sup>82</sup> William Richards, *The history of Lynn* (1812).
- <sup>83</sup> Sweet, *The writing of urban histories in eighteenth-century England*, 173.
- <sup>84</sup> Blomefield also published one small volume entitled *Collectanea Cantabrigiensia, or Collections relating to Cambridge, University, town, and county* in 1751, which can only be described as antiquarian in character. See David Stoker, ‘The genesis of ‘Collectanea Cantabrigiensia’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, IX, (1989), 372-380.
- <sup>85</sup> Graham Parry, *The trophies of time: English antiquarians of the seventeenth*, (Oxford 1995), 9.
- <sup>86</sup> Blomefield’s proposals issued in 1733 stated his intention to carry out similar studies of Suffolk and Cambridge when he had finished Norfolk, and he did make limited collections for these counties.
- <sup>87</sup> Bodl. Lib Ms. Gough Norfolk 5 f.69.
- <sup>88</sup> William Lambarde, *A perambulation of Kent*, (1570), John Norden, *An historical and chorographical discription of Middlesex*, (1596), Richard Carew, *A survey of Cornwall*, (1602), or William Burton, *A description of Leicestershire*, (1622).
- <sup>89</sup> Sir William Dugdale, *The antiquities of Warwickshire illustrated*, (1656), Robert Thoroton, *The antiquities of Nottinghamshire*, (1677), and Elias Ashmole, *The antiquities of Berkshire*, (1719).

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<sup>90</sup> Sir Henry Chauncy, *The historical antiquities of Hertfordshire*, (1700), Sir Robert Atkyns, and *The ancient and present state of Glostershire*, (1712).

<sup>91</sup> Blomefield appears to have been one of the first to use the term “topographical history” in the full-title of a historical work. However the formula “a history ... natural, moral, and topographical, was used as a subtitle by Martin Martin on *A late voyage to St. Kilda*, 1698, and that of “a topographical, ecclesiastical, and natural history” in the subtitle of the individual parts of Thomas Cox *Magna Britannia*, 1700, but not on the title of the finished work. The phrase “an essay towards” was in fairly common use in book titles from the middle of the seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth century.

<sup>92</sup> Blomefield, *History of the ancient city and burgh of Thetford*, and *History of the city and county of Norwich*, (1745).

<sup>93</sup> George Kitson Clark, *The critical historian*, (1967), 37.

<sup>94</sup> John Fenn, *Original letters, written during the reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV. and Richard III. by various persons of rank or consequence*, 5v. (1787-1823). I., Preface pp.ix-xi.

<sup>95</sup> Hassell Smith and Roger Virgoe, ‘Norfolk’, in *A guide to English county histories*, ed. C.R.J Currie and C.P. Lewis, (1997), 282-3.