**Transcription of the Audio Guide.**

Hello, and welcome to this audio guide, made for the Hoxne Heritage Group.

This walk will take you about two and a half hours if you do it all, or just over an hour if you do the shorter loop without any breaks.

You should have with you a map that you have downloaded, and you should be able to find your way around without me, but I will be giving you some instructions anyway.

You should now have found your way to the St. Edmund’s Village Hall car park.

So not only welcome to the guide, but welcome to the village of Hoxne. I'm Nicholas Jenkins and I'll be your guide. But it won't be just me, we've also been talking to some people who live here, or who have stories to tell. People like church warden, Brian Chester.

"My wife often says that if the world ends we'll have another couple of weeks here because things were so different, so very much rural, but wonderful."

But apart from its rural charm, Hoxne attracts the interest of scholars, such as Edward Martin.

“Hoxne is one of those wonderful places where everything seems to happen."

Edward recently retired from the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service.

“It’s the type site for the Hoxnian Interglacial, it has a Roman Treasure, it has the Bishopric, it has St. Edmund and so it goes on."

One of the peculiar things about the village, though, is its spelling, H O X N E, and as you can imagine that confuses people.

"It was instead discovered in 1992 at Hox knee, in Suffolk, and is now kept in the British Museum."

That's the brilliant historian and broadcaster, Simon Schama, getting it wrong on an award winning documentary on the BBC, no less. So, it's a common mistake.

"People often say how do you pronounce it, Hox knee is the most common of the interpretations, we have heard Hone, from the rather more upper class."

“Hoaxen, Hox knee"

And that was the voice of this gentleman, who we have summoned to keep us on the straight and narrow on this walk.

"My name is Brian, Brian Goddard. Hoxne born and bred."

And it would be unfair to leave you hanging at this juncture, so let's hear Edward Martin explain just what Hoxne means.

"Well it's Hock sinew, so think of a hock, like a horse's hock, which is the heel, and that's what it is. So it should be Hock sin which would make more sense. Most people would be able to pronounce it then."

But Hoxne (rhymes with oxen), it is.

We've heard that Hoxne is a quiet place, but it has had better days. In 1337 Hoxne was among the top 8 wealthiest towns in Suffolk by population and taxable wealth, but by 1350 it had rather lost its way as life moved on. When Brian Chester moved here in the early 1970's, Hoxne was not just quiet but also slightly disjointed.

"Then it was still very much three separate areas, in the sense we had Low Street, where the church, the pub and the Village Hall were and still are and the shop, which is very important. Then you had Cross Street, which is half way between, and Heckfield Green, where we are, which was very much sitting on the periphery, but with the school and the playing field."

But these days, Hoxne's a unity for all 900, or so, residents and we'll be exploring all the areas on this walk.

So you are standing outside St. Edmund’s Hall. It was built by a local benefactor, Sir Edward Kerrison in 1879, as a reading room. And have you noticed the St. Edmund’s plaque on the wall? If you're confused about what it depicts, someone lurking under a bridge and people looking down at him, well you'll learn more about that on the next stop.

The building may possibly have been designed by Edward Buckton Lamb, the so called rogue architect, who designed the Eye Town hall, which Nicholas Pevsner famously loathed but, which has won admirers over the years, as Victorian architecture has enjoyed a bit of a critical comeback. It's belonged to Hoxne Parish Council since 1962 and is still in regular use.

Another thing to look at, and about which you will hear more, and also see further examples of, is that very characteristic brickwork that makes up the car park wall.

Anyway, our next stop is the Goldbrook Bridge, which you will see to your left as you exit the car park. So join me there.

**This is stop 2 of the Hoxne Audio Trail.**

You are now standing on the Goldbrook Bridge which has given birth to one of Hoxne's most potent myths. St. Edmund was the king of East Anglia, and for a while was actually the patron saint of England. There is actually a relatively light-hearted movement in Suffolk campaigning to have him brought back, and Radio Suffolk's Leslie Dolphin, recently planted the St Edmund’s flag on top of Mount Kilimanjaro.

The reason for his demotion was that Edward the third felt it inappropriate to choose someone who was so soundly defeated in battle by the Vikings, and so chose the largely fictitious St. George instead. In these parts it is believed that the Danes finally caught up with Edmund just beneath your feet. All Hoxne people can tell you this tale.

"The Goldbrook Bridge, right yes, King Edmund. He was hiding under the bridge that day and apparently this married couple went over the bridge and actually looked over the bridge and just see his sword glistening in the water. 'Cos that's how he got found out and he cursed all the married couples going over that bridge so now, you see, when they get married they go round the top road at Hoxne to the church instead of over the Goldbrook Bridge and that has been like that for years."

Now, I grew up in the area and I remember hearing similar versions from the kids at school, it's not one of those legends that tends to be cooked up in tourist information offices, and freshly married couples really do avoid it.

" Why it's called the Goldbrook, there is a 14th century mention of something called the Goldbrook, but then people have invented a tale, which is that Edmund is there with his gold spurs underneath and he's betrayed by this couple going to be married and he curses people going to get married. It seems a bit unhelpful of him."

Edward Martin will be explaining more about possibly why the cult of St Edmund was encouraged later on the tour.

The brook seems innocuous enough though, doesn't it? But it occasionally floods, and just occasionally that flood is almost biblical.

"There was a flood from the Goldbrook Bridge all the way to the Swan, and we swam on the road because it was that deep. Well I've never seen it flood like that since."

And the Swan pub that Brian Goddard mentioned is in 2 stops time on the tour.

We're heading that way now, but first we'll stop off to have a peep at what remains of Hoxne Hall.

Turn right towards the Village and cross the road to stay on the pavement. Stop at the entrance to the driveway on the left, before the bridge, where you can glimpse the stables of the former Oakley Park in the distance through this private garden.

**This is stop 3 of the Hoxne Audio Tour.**

You should now be looking across to a distant row of stables. This is hardly Hoxne's greatest tourist attraction, but that demonstrates just how things have changed and evolved in Hoxne over the centuries. This was the location of the Bishop's Palace.

"It is now very different from what it has been. We have a wonderful map of 1619 showing this moated palace of the Bishops, which was then completely done away with, the moat filled in and it became Oakley Park."

This reconstruction work was done by Sir Edward Kerrison, who we first encountered at the start of the walk. It had been purchased by his father, Matthias Kerrison.

"The Kerrisons were the grand land owners for that whole area and are important in Hoxne, in Brome and in Eye as land owners. Their house has also gone and all we've got left are the stables of Oakley Park left in a field which had the Bishop's Palace and all these other things in it."

A rather melancholy Edward Martin there.

Sir Edward Kerrison died childless and the estate was passed through other Kerrisons and was eventually demolished and sold of as building materials.

OK, time for our next stop, The Swan Inn, ahead of you on the left just past the bridge.

And as you head there just think of the 9 year old, Brian Goddard, still swimming along the road.

**This is stop 4 of the Hoxne Audio Trail.**

You should be at the Swan Inn, which is a particularly nice old style pub. I've had some great meals there over the years. It's a 15th century listed building formerly known as the Bishop's Lodge. It was built in 1480 by the Bishop of Norwich, and if you go inside you will find ornate ceiling beams and wide planked floors. There is a 16th century side passage which suggests, to those in the know, that it was an inn, even in those days. Over the years the Swan has been used for things like cock fighting and for sales. Around the back is a beer garden that previously was used for bowls and quoits.

Well, we now move on to the village green, so simply cross the road opposite the pub and re-join me near that public footpath sign.

**This is stop 5 of the Hoxne Audio Trail.**

You should now be looking at the road and see the land rising ahead of you, and that is the Village Green. To your right you will see a single story building with a classical façade and this was the butchers. Brian Goddard remembers the butcher.

"A big chap, he was, he used to come round with the meat. He always used to wear his apron that would be covered with blood. It's amazing that people bought meat off him. I think that it is now offices but the design is still the same. He had several shops in Hoxne in them days."

Which brings us to a rather touchy subject for most villages these days.

Brian Chester:-

"When we came in the 70's there were one, two, three, four, five other shops in the village then, and a coal merchant and a shoe shop and a doctor's surgery. So all the lot of those have gone now but it's still a good place to be."

Can you spot the Hovis sign, still there even though the Bakery itself packed up in the 1980’s?

The general area in front of you, the Village Green, was probably much more extensive in the past. At the time of the Domesday Book there were weekly markets, originally one of the biggest in the area and this tradition was continued until the 17th century. In the 18th century it became important as a cattle fair for the whole of December as drovers stopped on their way from Scotland to London.

On your left you'll see the court house, now divided into three separate dwellings. It dates from the 16th century and functioned as the Manorial Court for the Lords of the Manor at Hoxne Hall. At later times it was a pub, the Queen's Head or the King's Head depending on the gender of the bottom on the throne, and Beech Cottage, which is the one with the shop style window, was actually a fishmonger's in the 19th century.

Further up the hill on the left you'll see a rendered and thatched house which was the old Police House until the 1880's. The cellar was used as a lock-up, and you can see the barred windows if you look closely, but please do remember that this is a private house.

Later on the walk we'll learn about the famous Hoxne Hoard, the owner of the former Police House has also uncovered interesting items while digging, in his case, buttons from Police uniforms.

So, as Edward Martin told us at the start of our walk - Hoxne is a place where interesting things really do happen.

I'll leave you to enjoy the Village Green, but when you are ready we'll go up the hill to our next stop, the church of St. Peter and St. Paul. Take the tarmac path on the right of the Green, up through the houses towards the church and the almshouses. Keep an eye out for the old school on the right. At the top you'll see the church, but do take care crossing the B1118, people like me drive there, on the way to Diss.

**This is stop 6 of the Hoxne Audio Trail.**

You should now be up at the church of St. Peter and St. Paul. You will recall at the beginning we heard about the meaning of the word Hoxne. This, here, is the spit of land that Edward Martin was telling us about.

"If you go up to the top there you can look both downwards, towards the north, the Waveney and down into Low Street as well and that is the hocksin which gave the name to the place. So we know that the core of Hoxne is up near the church and the moated site of the parsonage which could be, by the size of it, the first site of the Bishopric house."

The parsonage or vicarage is a private dwelling, but most grand. It was even bigger in the past. It also used to be massively overgrown. I grew up in the area and it was only a few years ago that I saw the vicarage for the very first time, once the new owners had set about removing the jungle. Like a number of grand houses in Suffolk it has a partial moat.

So, what of the church. There is an early mention of the church in the charter of Norwich Cathedral in 1119. There was also a church referred to here in the Domesday Book. But the church of St. Peter and St. Paul is in the perpendicular style dating it between 1350 and the end of the 1400's. The tower and the south porch were both added in 1450. As the present churchwarden Brian Chester knows well it attracts people for a variety of reasons.

"A lot of people who come to the church are looking for ancestors, so we have a directory there to the graves which is outside and easily visible to people. They come out of interest for the history of the village. We have a display there of the Heritage Walk which takes you round the village and also the Hoxne Hoard, it tells you all about that and again about St. Edmund."

Well perhaps you would like to go in and take a look around, and do watch your headwear.

"I always remember going in the church with a hat on one day and the vicar said 'What are you doing with that hat on?' I said well last time I was in here I got my head wet. That’s a joke."

"It's a very long church for this part of the world, and the oldest part of it dates back to about the 1300s, which is the north aisle. Dividing the north aisle from the chancel is a wonderful arcade on top of which are the remnants of four big doom paintings. Paintings which depict various biblical stories. So you have St. Christopher carrying the Christ Child on number one, you have the seven deadly sins on number two, the seven acts of mercy on number three and the last judgement on number four. Very sadly they are only just distinguishable now, they were painted in medieval times, 14th century, and time has taken its toll and they were also painted over during or after the reformation or after the Cromwellian period when people didn't like to see that sort of ornamentation in church."

You'll also find inside a monument to Sir Edward Kerrison, whose name we've heard quite frequently on this walk.

Our walk continues back by that public footpath sign, we stopped at, opposite the Swan Inn, by the former butchers. Before you return, and again be careful crossing the road, take a look at the row of almshouses to your left as you exit the churchyard. These are now private dwellings but were built in 1848, by Sir Edward Kerrison, on the site of the Guildhall, which itself had been the Hoxne Workhouse until the new workhouse was built in Stradbroke.

Join me again back at the butcher’s.

**This is stop number 7.**

To get to the St. Edmund's Cross requires a bit of navigation, so I suggest we do it in stages. Start off down the footpath; get ready to bear right where the footpath splits. I suggest you now switch off your devices and switch them back on again when you have reached that point.

Right, you should now be at the point where the footpath splits. Before we head off to find the St. Edmund's Cross you may be delighted to know that you've passed the site of, what was once, the Hoxne rubbish dump. Brian Goddard has fond memories of it.

"We used to go down there quite regular. That was very frightening at night because of the rats. We used to go down there to shoot the rats with our air guns, you know. Another thing we used to do, we used to walk down the dumps, right across the fields with spanners and then we'd cycle home. Once we got down there we could make our own bicycles up and cycle them on the field."

Let me now give you some instructions, follow the footpath, bearing right at the split, following it down over the bridge. Turn left along the Leylandii hedgerow until you meet the unmade driveway, where you then turn right. You will then see the St. Edmund's Cross on your left. So, consult the map, pause your machines and rejoin me there.

You should now be able to see the St. Edmund's Cross, just before you reach the road.

Time now to hear from Edward Martin for an explanation for the real reason St. Edmund has been placed in Hoxne.

"The Domesday record says that the seat of the East Anglian Bishop in Suffolk is at Hoxne. So we have a Bishop's seat at Hoxne, so it is obviously an important place, it's been chosen. It's a very complicated story to do with rivalry between Bury St. Edmunds, the Abbey, and the Bishops of Norwich, that probably sites the martyrdom of Edmund in Hoxne. If you think about it, the Bishop is in opposition to the Abbott, and the Abbott has this wonderful site, has the relics of Edmund, the great East Anglian Saint, the Bishop hasn't. So how do you combat that? You combat that by saying that, well actually the martyrdom is here, in the bit that I control, at Hoxne. This is probably why Hoxne then develops the story of being the martyrdom site because we don't really know where it is but it probably wasn't at Hoxne."

The Cross marks the spot where, rather speculatively, Edmund was deemed to have been murdered.

"An ancient oak fell over and they thought that there was a piece of metal in it, which was arrows. And this was obviously where Edmund had been actually martyred. So the Kerrison family, who happened to own the land, decided to make a monument which is where the cross is now in the field. Which is a pilgrimage site for those who want to go to see where Edmund was shot but it probably isn't."

Edward Martin, formerly of the Suffolk Council Archaeological Service.

To reach the next stop on the walk, turn left and walk up the hill until you reach Abbey Farm and Red Lion Close.

**This is stop 8 of the Hoxne Audio Trail.**

You're standing at Abbey Farm, which was built on the site of a Benedictine priory. This had a chapel which contained relicts of St Edmund and it was also claimed to have been erected on the very spot where Edmund was martyred. When the Hoxne monks were recalled to Norwich in about 1540, Sir Richard Gresham bought the Priory lands, had the Priory demolished and built a large house on the site, and the East wing is the only part of that house that still survives. The only part of the Priory that was left was the flint rubble wall adjacent to the road. The wall is listed Grade 2, is approximately 40 metres in length and up to 3 metres high along the western precinct boundary to the south of the driveway to Abbey Farmhouse. This incorporates 2 blocked openings, with 2 pointed arches, and evidently survived as the western wall of a building. The house was taken over by the Thruston family in the 16th century and in the Hearth Tax return for 1674 they are recorded as having 15 hearths, nearly twice the number of any other house in Hoxne, although, curiously, there was no mention in the Hearth Tax return of Hoxne Hall or the Maynard family. The Thurstons remained at the Abbey for much of the 16th and 17th centuries and there are several memorials to them in the church. In the 1730's the house was converted to a farmhouse, and that and the estate belonging to it was taken over by the Maynard family.

Now our next stop is Red Lion Close, where a famous Hoxne pub once stood.

**This is stop number 9.**

This is the site of the former Red Lion pub. The Red Lion was badly damaged by a fire in 1964 and was subsequently demolished. It was timber framed with a thatched roof. It was taken over by Alec Jolly in 1958 and it is our good fortune that Alec is a superb speaker. One only has to listen to Alec talking to understand why people such as George Ewart Evans and Adrian Bell were so impressed with the East Anglian dialect and its expressive character. Now Alec had been curious about running a pub and asked his uncle for advice.

"My boy, he said, you're after that pub down the road aren't you? I said, well yer. He said well you want to put a year or two on your age or I assure you you won't get that. So anyway, me being me, I'd got a very good memory, I still have, or I won't be doing this. I remembered that so when this chap come in there, Mr Beales from Stuart and Paterson Brewery, he said, by the way Mr Jolly, how old are you?  I said, well, I'm  26; but I weren't, I was 24, I put 2 years on, and he said you're rather young for this but never mind eh, I think we've got one the same age as you in the Wingfield King's Head. So anyway we agreed everything, even agreed the rent and he’d stated that old Bert, he’d be doing the inventory for Bird as well as me. That would make it cheaper for you, he said. Then we negotiated the rent. One more thing he did say now we've got that far that this usually destroys everything, he said, do you know about the pail? Yes, I said, I fully understand about the pail because I've still got one of them where I'm living now. What he meant by the pail was that there was no sewer. So I got this pail, now you see to empty now. That always used to put a smile on my face when the pail was full, even when it was running over, because that meant I had had a lot of people in the pub. So I was quite happy when the pail runned over. Because I had to dig a hole and bury it, I used to dig a big hole and leave it for about 5 or 6 weeks before I filled it and dug another one."

Alec had to pay £26 a year, and that also included 10 acres of land that he was allowed to farm. There were other pubs in Hoxne at the time, so it was quite a competitive environment, but Alec Jolly had a good sense for business.

“I hadn't been in there long and I noticed there was lots on young uns and there was literally nowhere for them to go. That weren't my expertise, really, it was just a fact that there was nowhere for them to go and, of course, they used to come here, you see. They weren't like customers that I used to see, perhaps, once or twice a week, they'd be there, practically every day, they'd come. Then you see , as I've said previous, you see, there was bikes, very few cars, so they’d got, what bit of money they earned they'd got money to spend in a pub hadn’t they. And, then you see, after I'd been in there about 4 or 5 months, them young uns wanted a juke box, so I got one. Well the nearest juke box, you see, was 6 mile away, that was in Diss. At that time, I was really sort of in front with the juke box, that drew them from a long way round."

And the final result was nearly 200 regular customers. Alas, the pub burnt down as result of children playing with matches and Alec lost his business, but I'm glad to say he eventually bounced back.

So, carry on along Cross Street, being careful of the traffic at the sharp right hand bend, continue past the old wheelwrights, to the well and the old forge at the junction of Nuttery Vale.

**This is stop number 10 of the Hoxne Audio Trail.**

If you want to take the shorter route, then consult your map and head down Nuttery Vale. Aim for stop number 14 on the map, the location of the Hoxne Hoard. But we are going to continue past the junction, and the old Baptist Church will now be on your right, with the thatched former Grapes public house opposite, and we will continue walking until we reach St. Edmund's Primary School.

As you walk there are some interesting things to note. You'll see the wheelwright's with its wheel-shaped window on the gable. This is a 17th century house and the business was run by the Leggett family from the late 19th century until 1969. On the corner of Nuttery Vale was the forge. It was used by blacksmiths from the late 19th century until the 1960's, later becoming a pottery for a bit. On the left you will see, what is now a private residence, but was The Grapes Inn which closed only in the mid 1990's. It's timber-framed with a thatched roof and it was a former open hall house from the 15th century, with the upper end rebuilt and enlarged about 1700. You'll also notice the Banham brick walling, which you will have first noticed at the Edmund Hall car park. It's something that Edward Martin says is characteristic of all things built by Edward Kerrison.

“He seems to have been keen on the rather open work brick walls using drainage pipes which you can see at Edmund Hall in Hoxne, around it. If you see how that looks and you walk around Hoxne you'll find it all over the place. It's around the parsonage site, the rectory has got it. At Cross Green you can find it. You can find it over at Broome around his house there. It became a sort of local style."

Most of this material and the treble roll red pan tiles probably originated from the brickworks on the Eye Road which we will be visiting at the end of the tour. These walls are built in 9 inch half round hollow coping bricks set at 90 degrees to their original design in staggered courses. Resulting in a pleasing perforated wall.

The Baptist Chapel was opened on the 2nd of December 1834, capable of seating 200 people.

Tudor Close is named for the Tudor coins dug up while it was being built.

You'll also see the St. Edmund's Primary School, and I can't resist not giving you this delightful piece of Hoxne oral history regarding the school, Brian Goddard and the craze, which of course now would be illegal, of rearing Jackdaws as pets.

"Yes, pet jackdaws. We used to go to this certain tree in the village, that used to be a hollow tree, all the jackdaws used to build every year. We used to take one of the young out; there would be 3 or 4 chicks in there.  We used take one and rear it up with bread and milk and it used to think we was its mother, you know. We used to let it out, it used to fly about, we used to say come on Jock, Jock we used to go. They used to come and sit on our arms and we all had a pet one each, you know, brilliant. Yes, great times."

Brian is now a truly excellent painter decorator and is fun to have in your house, because not only does the house look vastly better when he leaves, he also dispenses lovely stories like this one as he beavers away.

"One day I left the cage open, the little cage I used to make for it, and I can remember going out to play, play time at the primary school, and I thought as I looked up that can't be old Jackie and I went, Jock, like that, and that come down on my arm, you know, when I was playing at school. So I had to get the Headmaster and just tell him, can I just take my jackdaw home, you know."

Turn right before the school and follow the lane down the hill. At the bottom of the hill, after the bridge, cross the concrete area and follow the byway sign on the right. Proceed along the byway through the trees of Fir Plantation, in reality, broadleaved woodland, towards South Green. After passing cottages on your left, at the end of the byway, turn left. Take the immediate fork, passing South Green Farmhouse on your right and walk along to the corner where you have a view of Red House Farm across to the right.

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**This is stop number 11.**

This one is going to be rather short and sweet. You should now be looking at the Red House farmhouse which is a most elegant building. It was originally an early 16th century 3-cell house which had an early to mid 17th century addition at the service end, forming a long single range. It's timber framed and you will notice on the main front and the north and east gable end fine exposed studding and herring-bone brick noggin. And it's the colour of this brick which, of course, has given the farmhouse its name.

Retrace your steps back along the lane and turn right back along the byway. A short way along the byway, go over the stile on your left and across the field. Go over the stile opposite and follow the footpath until you reach the Eye Road. Turn right onto the Eye Road for a short way, taking care of traffic. Then turn right down Nuttery Vale.

**This is stop number 12.**

Again, this is another short and sweet stop.

As you go down Nuttery Vale you will actually pass the location for seeing the feature of stop number 13 on the right. Consult the map to see what I mean. So bear that in mind and when you have finished with Nuttery Vale back track. As you head down here though you will notice hazel that has been coppiced for making thatching spars.

Continue to Mill Mound, consult the map if you're lost, of course, and you can just about see the circular dish mound, about 30 metres in diameter and 3.2 metres high, partly hidden by a thicket of trees. This mound was for a post windmill, long since dismantled.

The most interesting feature in this part of Hoxne has its own stop, the next one, so head back and this time you need to look to the left.

**This is stop number 13.**

We've heard quite a bit about St. Edmund and his relationship to Hoxne. When we stopped at Abbey Farm we heard that the Benedictine Priory had its own chapel and relicts but as Edward Martin explains this was not the only such feature in Hoxne.

"Then there was another shrine, a chapel on the opposite hill from where the Priory is. Which was where he was supposed to have been, where the head was found, you know that Edmund's head is supposed to have been taken off and hidden in a wood. And the wolf comes and guards it and when they are coming to look for it the wolf says 'Here, here, here' and they go and find the head in the wood. There was a medieval chapel where the head was found. We did some excavations in the 1980's and found the site of that lost chapel of Edmund. We know where that is now. So there were two shrines in Hoxne which catered for the story of Edmund."

And so this chapel of St. Edmund in the wood was located in this area, something only known for sure since the early 1990's.

Continue along Nuttery Vale up the hill to Hoxne, then take the public footpath on the left, go over the little bridge across a ditch and turn left. Follow the footpath down the hill and across the stile. Continue to follow it to the right across the river bridge and through the gate up the field until you reach the Eye Road. Turn right and follow the Eye Road towards Hoxne and then you'll pass the place where the Hoxne Hoard was discovered, on the left.

**This is stop 14 of the Hoxne Audio Tour.**

So, we've finally reached the site of the great Hoxne Hoard, which now resides in the British Museum, and for a while back in 1992 made Hoxne the subject of front page headlines. The story begins with a retirement present given by the Electricity Board to Eric Lawes. It was a metal detector and this became Eric's hobby and people would come along and ask him to help them find things.

"A farmer where I actually find it, who farms the land, council land actually. And he gave me permission to look on his land because he had lost a big hammer off one of his tractors, or whatever, and he said if you ever find it I'd like to have it back."

Eventually Eric did find the hammer but, because he's a thorough kind of chap, he kept sweeping the ground and then his machine got rather excited.

“I found some coins, they all turned out to be Roman, and they had been scattered by one of his machines. So one thing led to the other and I found over 200 there actually. And I thought to myself, well, this looks very interesting."

"Well, we couldn't believe it; I think it was one of the strawberry fields, where we used to pick strawberries. We walked all round that all our lives, you know. It was amazing that was found there, you know what I mean."

"We were involved almost immediately when it was discovered."

This is Jude Plouvier, one of the archaeologists from Suffolk County Councils Archaeological Service in Bury St. Edmunds.

"So, after he'd started finding objects he consulted with the tenant farmer and they contacted Suffolk County Council. So both the Archaeological Service, the land agents and the police, because it was obviously a matter for the coroner, were all on the site by the afternoon of the day that Eric found it."

Archaeologists, like Jude, are full of admiration for Eric Lawes's restraint. Often people inadvertently wreck the site in their excitement, to the detriment of further knowledge. But not Eric.

"Eric only dug up about a third of the objects, if that, and the rest were professionally excavated and recorded the next day. So that we could tell where a wooden box had been in the ground, even though it had completely rotted away. You could see where the edges were, the way the objects were lying in the ground were up against the sides of the box, and that sort of thing. There were a few iron nails that must have held the box together."

It was an absolutely bitterly cold day and Jude remembers being half frozen to death but it's the magnitude of the find that really strikes her today.

"We were amazed by the quantities of everything, there are 450 gold coins, there are over 15 thousand silver coins. That is a lot of late Roman silver coins. That makes it one of the biggest coin hoards, even ignoring the very fine objects, in Britain, indeed in the late Roman Empire."

And the very nature of the hoard itself made answering certain historical questions much easier.

"One of the great things about Hoxne is that because it was full of coins, as well as objects, we can actually date roughly when it went into the ground. It went into the ground in the early 5th century, almost certainly after 410, so after Roman government was breaking down in this country."

Besides coins there are a hundred beautifully crafted spoons and ladles, the famous silver tiger, which was originally the handle for a larger vessel, and the stunning Empress pepper pot, which was number 40 in the BBC radio series, The History of the World in a Hundred Objects. It seems reasonable to suppose that breakdown in government and lawlessness prompted the owners to bury their goodies for safe keeping, but it's unlikely that we will ever know exactly why, or even who they were, but clearly they were wealthy Romans.

The hoard was purchased for the nation, as was the hammer that Eric was initially looking for. But for a while a lot of so called night hawks descended on Hoxne, illegally hoping that they might find other hoards in the area.

"That's weird really because the chap who found the hoard, I do work for him, I looked in his shed and he must have had about 30 or 40 shovels, forks and spades. I said 'What are all them for then?’ He said when they found the hoard people were coming there with metal detectors at night, he would disturb them and they would run off and leave all their tools there. That's why he'd got a shed full of brand new spades, forks and what have you."

It really is well worth making a trip to the British Museum to see the display. Its original box has been reconstructed and you can also see the beautifully crafted padlocks that were used to lock it, they have also survived. The hoard was voted third by museum staff for a television program called Our Top Ten Treasures. When I went recently it was gratifying to see people from all over the world marvelling at it, even if they do all mispronounce the village where it was found. One of Eric Lawes's proudest moments came when Prince Charles opened this part of the gallery and Eric was invited along. The Prince consulted Eric on the arcane arts of finding treasure underground.

"He said he had done a little bit of metal detecting in his time. He said 'No way for me, it was really boring. It was misty and cold and I didn't find nothing.' I laughed at that. He was OK, very good."

That was Eric Lawes the finder of the Hoxne Hoard.

So, please consult your map and carry on down the road.

**This is stop 15 of the Hoxne Audio Tour.**

Our final stop begins with an important question. How old is the earth? We now know the answer with remarkable accuracy, but to people in the 17th century it wasn't an easy question to answer. The famous Bishop Usher published a chronology based on what's written in the Bible and came to the conclusion that the earth was created on Sunday, October the 23rd, 4004 BC, at 9 o'clock in the morning. It's easy to make fun of him now but his method of calculation was entirely rational and logical. So how was this date challenged? One landmark came with the work of geologist James Hutton who noticed a rock formation east of Edinburgh at Siccar Point, which could only have come about over an unimaginable length of time. And another comes from roughly where you’re standing now. The honour for this work goes to a local country squire and Cambridge graduate from nearby Finningham, John Frere, who observed workmen digging clay to make bricks and finding, what he recognised, as flint tools.

"They'd have been made by humans, but made by humans at some very distant time but he wasn't taking in what the church said, 4004 years. He was saying that this thing must have come from a completely different age."

So, how did he deduce that they weren't made after 9 o'clock in 4004 BC?

"He was looking at it in terms of the depth that these things were coming out of. These things were coming out of a brick pit. He was also looking at the position of the brick pit, at the top of a hill and it was coming out of silt. So he realised that it couldn't have been washed in there, it had to come from a different sort of landscape. It was also coming out with bones of long extinct animals. He realised that this was coming together. There was this wonderful human thing of taking something, perhaps mundane, a flint, though a wonderfully made flint, but saying that there is more to it and understanding and trying to tell people about it, which tried to do. He wrote a paper to antiquarians in London and they published it. Nobody took any notice of it for about 60 years."

His article was published in 1797 and we now think that humans visited these pits 320,000 years ago. Hoxne is also a name you will find in geology textbooks because a phase in the Ice Age is named after it, the Hoxnian Interglacial.

"The great Ice Age in this area is called the Anglian and when that went back and you had a warmer period the key site is a Hoxne, which is the brick pits site. The brick earth is lake silt. That is what, later, brick makers were using as fine silt. What the flint tools were coming out of is people living on the edge of that lake, throwing tools into it. When people then came to dig out the brick earth, finding them. When we started to get more scientific and people looked at those silts they realised that they were interglacial. So it comes after the Anglian, which is the great Ice Sheet and before the next one which is Holsteinian."

The pit was exploited by the Banham Brickworks, who were a major employer in Hoxne. It's where the bricks that we see in those walls throughout the village were made. Brian Goddard's father worked there and it sounds like that it was very hard work indeed.

"Well Dad, they called him God, you see, Gotty Goddard, and he worked for W. H. Banham. They used to have this big pit to dig the clay out. My father's arms, he always looked like Popeye, his massive arms from digging that clay out, wheeling the clay out on these big planks straight into where they made the pipes. It used to be as hot as anything in there, really hot. They used to make the pipes, hard times for him working in the brickyard, it really was."

Brian Goddard bringing this audio guide to the village he was born and bred in to a close.

To get back to the St. Edmund’s car park just head down the road, turn right at the junction, over Goldbrook Bridge, unless you've just got married, of course, and the place you started from is there on the right.

On behalf of the Hoxne Heritage Group thank you for taking this tour and goodbye.