

Banham Walls - a Misnomer

At the end of 2015 HHG determined to investigate the distinctive ornamental walls found in Hoxne and the surrounding area, commonly known as Banham walls. We wanted to monitor how much they were deteriorating or disappearing with a view to encouraging their preservation.

As a starting point for our investigation we had a series of photos taken in Hoxne in the early 1990's, and in 2016 Chris Parkin and Julie Craven toured the surrounding area taking photos of examples in other villages. The project group met in 2016 to make a survey of the walls in Hoxne.

The brickworks

1. OS map 1903



There were once 2 brickyards in Hoxne. The site of the Depperhaugh brickworks next to Slades Wood was described in 1841 on the draft Tithe Apportionment as 7 acres of arable called Elwins Big Field. The 1851 census records a brickmaker named Amos West living on the Stradbroke Road, so the works probably started up between those dates. Trade directories list them active between 1883-1908.

But from the surviving moulds formerly in the church (now with the Banham family) it is clear the special ornamental bricks with which we were concerned came from the site, latterly known as the Banham brickworks, on the Eye Road.

The brickearth at that site was the result of sediments laid down in a prehistoric lake 400,000 years ago. There may have been brickmaking on the site since the Middle Ages but there is little written evidence of the brickworks history.

The site is on the edge of the New Park and may have been the source of bricks for the gateway and bishop's palace built sometime after 1485. It was certainly in operation in 1797 when John Frere made his discovery of stone tools on the site, as considerable excavations were then visible.

2. Tithe Map



In 1843 plot 409 on the Tithe Map was described as Brick Kiln, 3a 20 p, owned by Sir Edward Kerrison, and occupied by Woods. The 1841 Census shows that Woods was Richard Woods, a builder. There are 4 brickmakers listed, all named Wright and seemingly generations of the same family aged between 30 and 90.

We know between 1881-8 the brick and tile works were operated by a Charles Robinson, followed by the Hoxne Brickworks Company, whose manager in 1911 was Arthur William Banham; finally the brickyard was offered for sale in 1921 and 1923 during the break up of the Oakley Park estate and Banham & Son purchased the yard in 1925, producing bricks until 1937 and manufacturing pipes until 1965. From the number of brickmakers identified in the census records the heyday of brickmaking in the village appears to have been between 1861-1900.

The ornamental walls

There are 3 main types of ornamental wall. The simplest can be described as "halfpipe". The longest run of this type is on the north side of Cross St, Nos 6 – 12.

3. 10 Cross Street



The second type, such as the wall at the village hall or 16 Cross St uses 2 different bricks to make the pattern.

4. Village Hall



5. 16 Cross St



The third type has special bricks arranged in fours in a cross pattern, such as at Abbey View and Goldbrook House, to leave a quatrefoil shaped hole.

6. Abbey View



7. Detail of Cross/Quatrefoil type



We found a total of 25 properties with these walls, 10 halfpipes, 13 of the second type, and just the 2 of the cross/quatrefoil type in Hoxne.

We also noticed some of the plain walls, which traversed more than one property and had a distinctive large half round coping. The best examples were on Church Hill, continuous on one side from the Green up to Three Gables,

8. Church Hill West



and on the other side formerly running past Little Park House.

9. Little Park House in 1990's



Single examples of the same occur at Christmas Cottage and 44 Low St.

10. Christmas Cottage



11. 44 Low St



But, as the Banham family did not purchase the brickyard until 1925, probably the only wall that should be designated a Banham Wall is the continuous wall in front of the Banham Cottages on Cross St, built in 1934.

12. Banham Row



As we listed examples, even the plain walls, it became apparent they had mostly been owned by the **Oakley Park estate**. Pauline Rimmer checked each one against the Tithe Map, estate account books and cottage rentals in 1903, and sales particulars between 1897 - 1923.

Only 2 properties could not be linked directly to the estate – the vicarage and Ash View at Heckfield Green.

13. The Vicarage



The vicarage of course belonged to the church, but the Kerrisons had the advowson, or right to present the priest to the living – so there was a link.

14. Ash View



At Ash View the brick wall is built on top of concrete blocks and is obviously modern, possibly reusing bricks from elsewhere.

The Kerrisons also owned the land on which the school was built, seen here in a photograph of 1907.

15. School 1907



The surrounding area

In the surrounding area we found examples of the walls in Brome

16. Brome Hall



17. Brome Hall



18. Brome Hall, with pillars These pillars are found nowhere else.



19. Brome Church



20. Brome St



and in Eye, Upper and Lower Oakley, Thornham Magna, Monks Hall Syleham and Horham.

21. Eye Lambseth St



22. Eye Castle St



23. Eye Burnt House Farm



24. Upper Oakley



25. Lower Oakley



26. Thornham Magna



27. Syleham Monks Hall



28. Horham Hall Farm



and even one at Shimpling in Norfolk.

29. Shimpling



Some of these are definitely part of the Kerrison estate but we have not yet investigated them all.

So when were these ornamental walls with their special bricks built?

In most rural villages there are few garden walls – boundaries are marked by cheaper fences and hedges. Even most plain walls in Hoxne appear on Oakley estate properties.

There are some special angled bricks in the Swan bridge erected in 1853/8, so angled bricks were not unknown.

Probably the only wall we can date for sure is the wall at Hoxne village hall. In the 1840's the site where the village hall would later be built was part of the large garden of the cottage to the south, as recorded on the Tithe Map.

30. Tithe Map



This cottage and its present garden now has an old tall lime hedge fronting the road, which may have continued towards the bridge.

The wall in front of the village hall was most probably erected in 1878 - 9, at the same time as the hall and new bridge were built. The pillars to the front entrance are built in flint and tile to match the hall, with a new wall at either side.

31. Pillar at Village Hall



What was the inspiration?

Perhaps the brickyard was already producing special bricks, especially the half-pipe type (like drainage pipes) and angled bricks.

Or the instigator may have been the architect of the village hall, James Kellaway Colling, who was known for his use of terracotta decoration in his buildings. He may have asked the brickworks to supply the tiles which are such a feature of the hall and the bricks for the wall.

But an article in the SIA Proceedings of 1911 by a niece of Sir Edward Clarence Kerrison, states that his wife Lady Caroline, while living at Brome Hall, planned a Dutch Garden and Terrace “the brickwork being designed by her and the bricks made in the **estate kiln**”. She had married Kerrison in 1844 and they lived at Brome Hall until 1853 when he inherited Oakley Park house & estate. She seems to have been interested in architecture. In 1864 she published a book of Plans and Estimates for Labourers’ Cottages, including estimates for all the bricks and tiles. Owing to her husband’s ill health they moved back to Brome Hall some years before his death in 1886. But he was apparently well at the opening of the village hall in 1879 so, as the wall in front of the village hall cannot have been built before that, it seems likely her designs belong to the period 1880-6.

We cannot know how it all started. Did Kellaway commission some, and Lady Caroline later design the more high status elements, the quatrefoil type and pillars, which are relatively scarce? [Only Goldbrook House, home to the estate steward, Abbey View, home of the brickyard manager, Brome Hall and Church, and Monks Hall Syleham have the quatrefoils

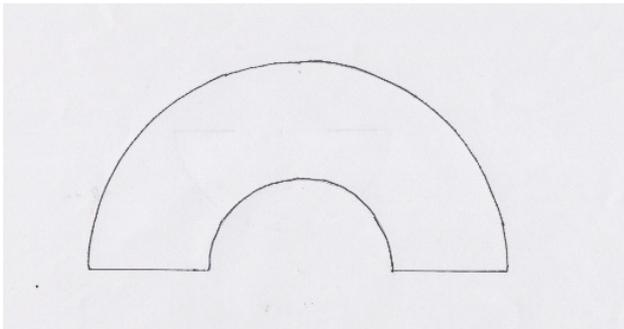
and only Brome Hall itself has the pillars.] Whoever was responsible, it is likely the fashion for these walls belongs to the late Victorian era during the heyday of the brickyard.

Bricks

The plain standard bricks used at that time were slightly longer and thinner than modern bricks, and varied slightly in size. They were usually 9" in length and at most 2 ½ inches high.

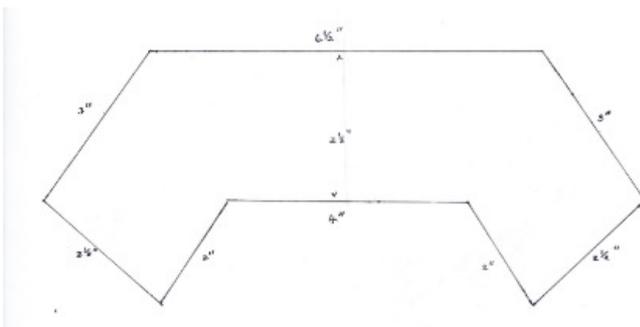
The half-pipe bricks are crude and often not quite semi-circular. They were 6 inches deep, 9 inches across the base and 2 or 2 ¼ inches thick

32. Half pipe bricks

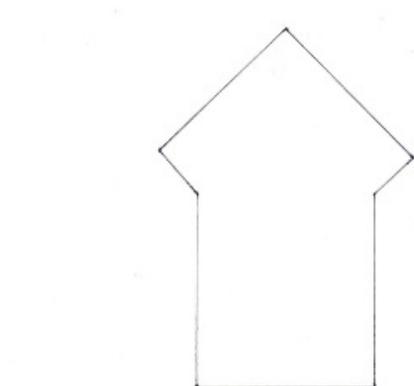


The type used at the village hall to make a pattern were also 6" deep,

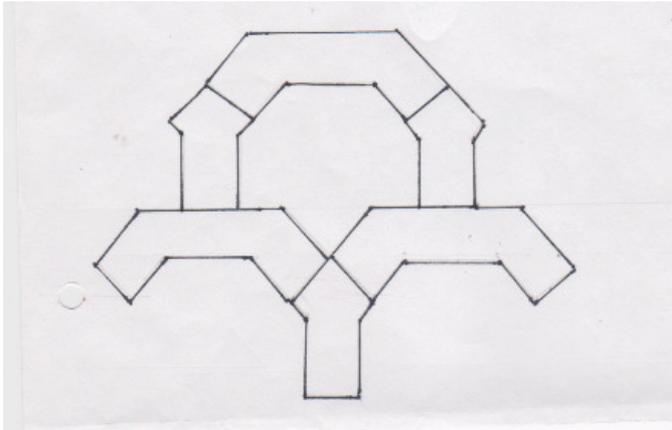
33. Village Hall bricks



34. Village Hall bricks

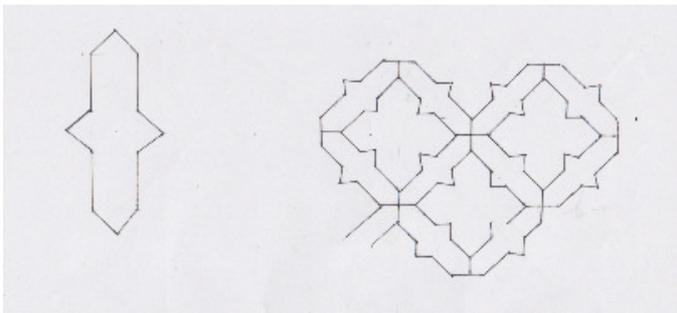


35. Village Hall bricks



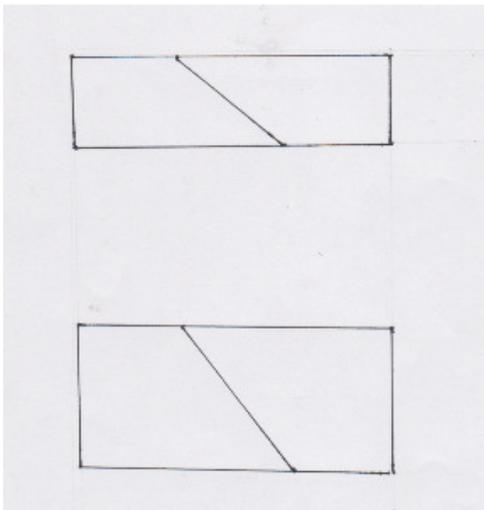
As were the cross/quatrefoil type.

36. Cross/Quatrefoil type bricks



But there are other types which are less obvious. Bricks cut on the diagonal were used for dog tooth decoration.

37. Diagonal cut



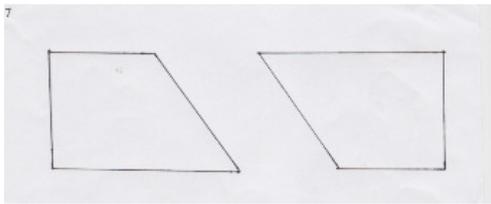
and some angled bricks were separately produced in this shape, not cut.

38. Angled brick



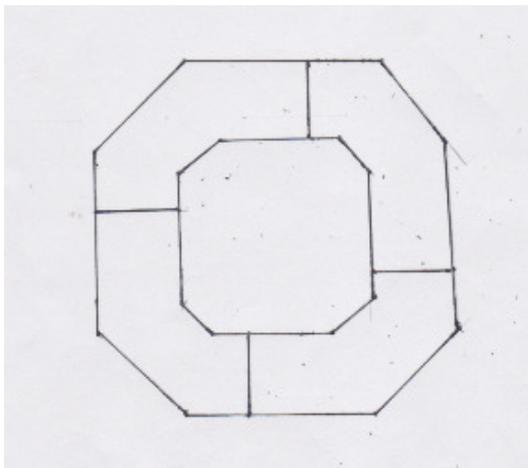
There were also base stones. This drawing shows the profile of one of these – the diagonal being the front face of the brick - which could be used either way up.

39. Base stones



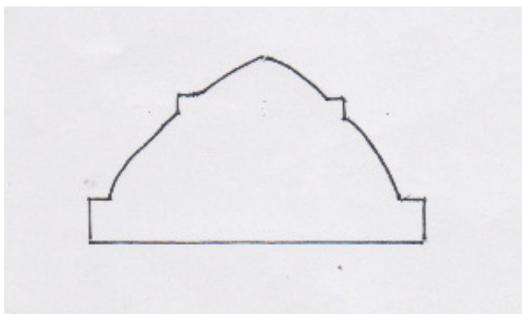
A brick with 3 angles was found in pillars at the Swan and Goldbrook House.

40. Brick with 3 angles



There were also a variety of copings. The round coping has the same profile as the half pipe brick but is twice its length. The ridged coping was widely used on the ornamental walls.

41. Ridged coping profile



There was yet another type at the Swan.

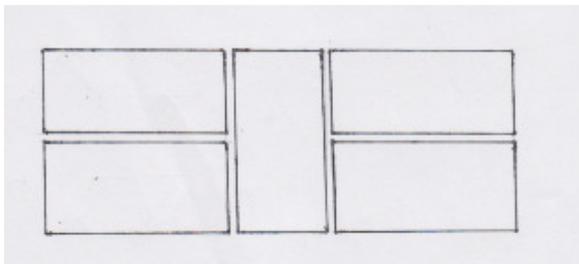
42. Swan coping



Wall construction

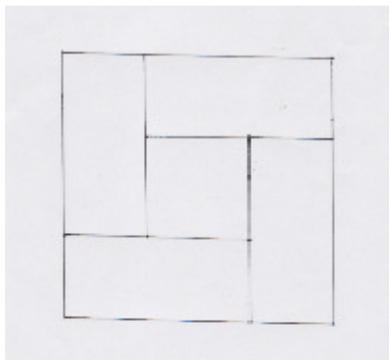
We looked at how the walls were built. The simplest was 3 or 4 courses of standard bricks laid in Flemish Bond [headers and stretchers] giving a depth of 9 inches.

43. Flemish Bond seen from above



Then courses of half pipe bricks, and a pillar of plain bricks , and a coping on top.

44. Simple pillar

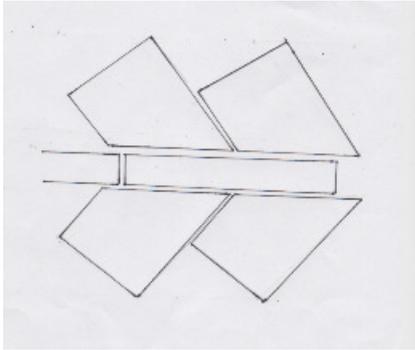


45. 9 Cross St



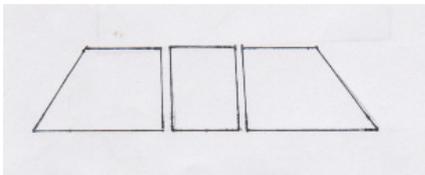
But some walls were more complicated than at first appears. The wall at the **village hall** has courses of standard bricks laid in Flemish Bond. Then a course laid diagonally for a dog-tooth decoration. But if you simply turn a 9" brick on the diagonal it does not project beyond the wall face. The builder had in fact cut bricks in half on the diagonal and laid them in a course with split bricks (probably rejects) used as a filler, so that the wall depth was now 10 – 11 inches, allowing for mortar.

46. Dog tooth course



On that was a course of base stones with the longest edge at the base with a split plain brick in the centre. This arrangement has a base of 10 -11 inches above the dog tooth course and a top about 7 inches deep to receive the courses of 6 inch deep special bricks.

47. Base stone course



Then a course of thin tiles 9 ½ inches by ½ inch to bridge the gaps above the special bricks and another course of base stones reversed so the longest edge is now at the top, giving a wide base for another course of dog tooth, topped off by another course of sloping base stones and the large ridged coping.

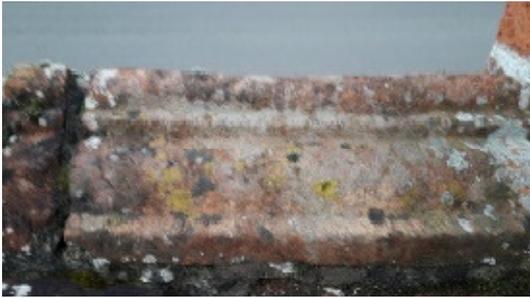
48. Tiles close up



49. Top of wall

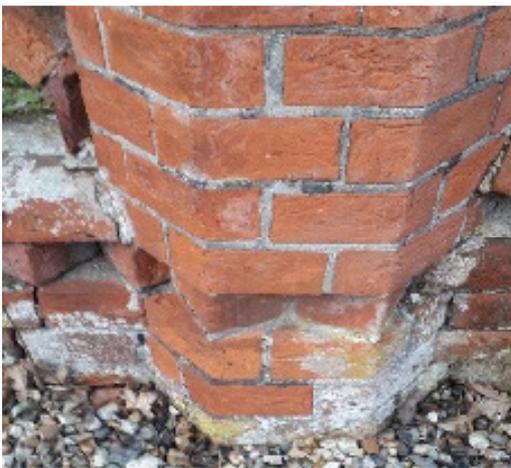


50. Ridged coping.



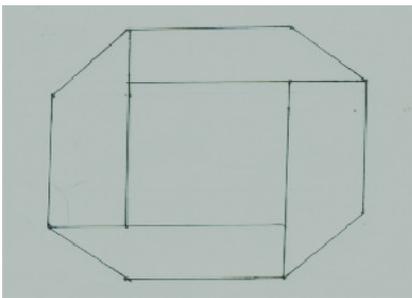
Most of the **pillars** are brick built using the bricks we have already seen. So the column uses angled bricks and has dog tooth courses.

51. Pillar column



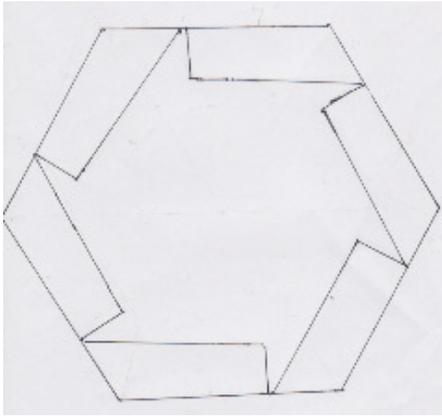
At first it seemed the bricks were arranged like this, but in that case the sides would not be equal in length,

52. Pillar construction – unequal sides



so the arrangement might be this.

53. Pillar construction – equal sides

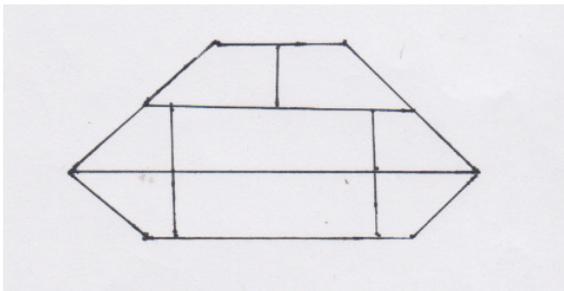


The tops of the pillars are also constructed from this repertoire of bricks. There are 3 courses of base stones

54. Pillar top – base stones

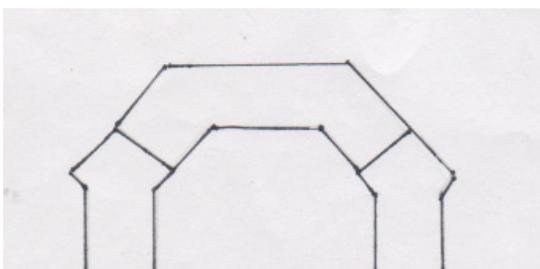


55. Base stones arrangement



then the pattern bricks arranged crosswise with pieces of brick to infill.

56. Pattern bricks drawing



57. Pillar top



At **Goldbrook House** there are 6 courses of Flemish Bond, then the cross type pattern, followed by a course of slate to bridge the large gap above the special bricks, the dogtooth decoration, basestones and coping. The pillars are of bricks with 3 angles.

Other walls are all **variations** of the same items.

In conclusion the walls were a means for the Kerrison family to mark their presence and ownership. The plain walls and half pipe walls are usually reserved for the smaller cottages, where as bigger houses got something more elaborate.

The problem with all the patterned walls is that they are inherently **unstable**. On a base of 9 inches, 2 courses deep, they narrow to courses of a single brick just 6 " deep, and then many are widened again to take a double course and a large coping. So the **wall centre** is **vulnerable** to accidental damage.

In recent years the walls at Goldbrook House and 16 Cross St have been partially knocked down and rebuilt. At Goldbrook House we found the repaired section had sheet asbestos used to replace the course of slate. At 16 Cross Street it was found that 7 different shaped bricks had been used in its construction. The wall which once existed around the school disappeared long ago. Although only a plain wall, most of the one at Little Park House has been demolished for car parking, changing the once homogenous appearance of the street. On the other side of Church Hill the walls are now completely covered in ivy which is probably damaging them.

And the walls at Horham have been rebuilt in a modern brick, not the old red brick and look wrong.

58. Horham



Planning Protection

The walls of listed buildings are protected in law, as nothing within the curtilage can be changed without listed building consent. Fortunately this does apply to most of our walls. But garden walls are not usually protected from demolition, even in a conservation area, where consent is only required for demolition of a building.

What happened at Little Park House has been noted. No 40, on the other side of the road, is not listed, so that wall is also vulnerable, so is the one at 44 Low St. More importantly Hoxne village hall itself is not listed - its only protection is ownership by the parish. The areas of most concern are nos 9-12 and 17-19 Cross Street, which are not listed and are so important to the street scene.