

HISTORY OF COLTISHALL

Today Coltishall is one of the nicest villages on the Norfolk Broads – but not even its greatest fan would call it a town. However, visitors in Victorian times had no hesitation in describing it as such. "A small town on the high road between Norwich and North Walsham," as one trade directory put it.

Coltishall's growth in the 19th century certainly owed something to its position on a main road. Rather more important was its place on the River Bure, an important trade route between Aylsham and Great Yarmouth. The arrival of the railway in 1879 was another boost. Coltishall found itself well connected at a time when demand for the goods and services it produced was rising.

The brewing industry was very important to the village. Coltishall had a medium sized brewery but it mostly specialised in malting - the process of turning barley into malt. It was, according to a history of the national brewing industry, "a famed malting centre" supplying leading brewers such as Truman's and Guinness. Sailing barges called wherries brought barley to more than a dozen malthouses in the village. The largest were in Anchor Street, White Lion Road, next to the Rising Sun and near the Salvation Army meeting hall. The finished malt was then taken by wherry or railway to breweries as far afield as London. This cluster of malthouses created plenty of employment and stimulated other industries, most notably boat building. Coltishall is reputed to have been the birthplace of the wherry. Norfolk keels - the forerunner of the wherry - are believed to have been built in Anchor Street, and it is there that the yards established themselves. From the 1860s an average of one new wherry each year was launched in Coltishall. The leading yard was that run by the Allen family. Coltishall wherries were built for the narrower waters of the rivers Ant and Bure, so they were smaller and faster than those made elsewhere for the larger rivers. The last trading wherry built in Norfolk was launched in Coltishall in 1912.

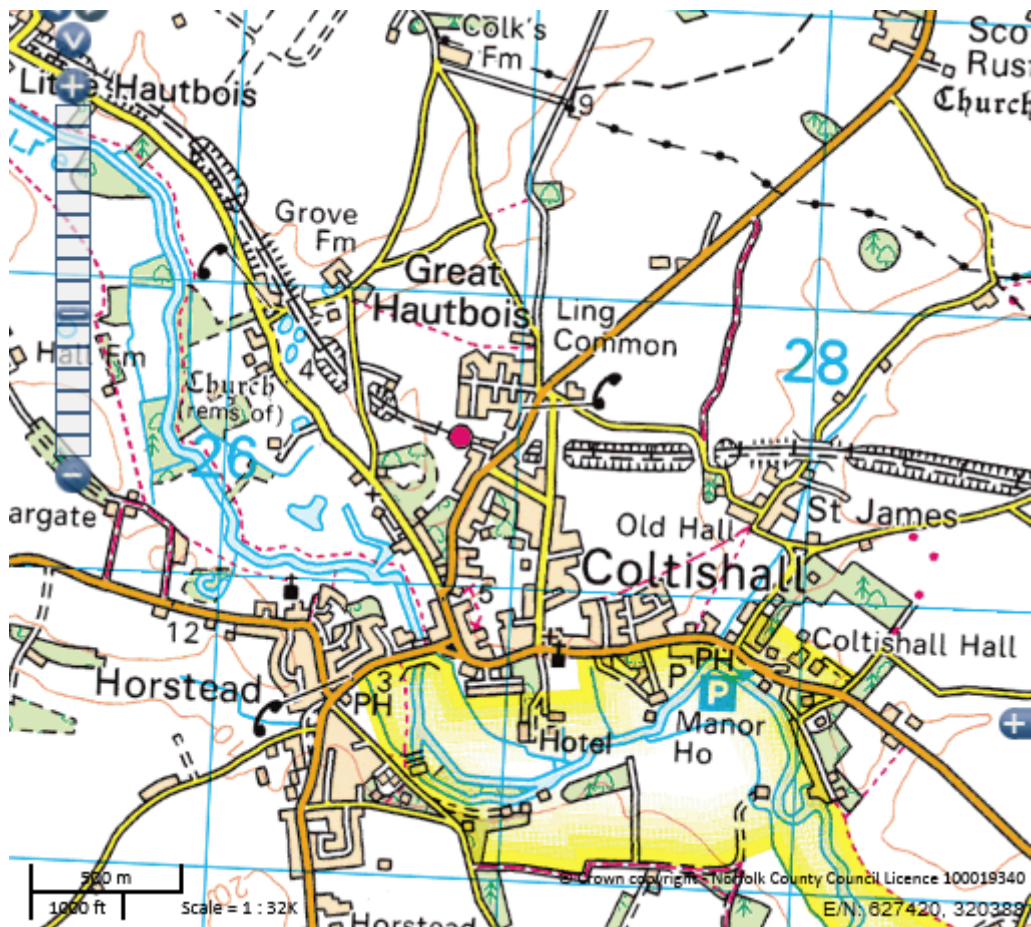
Supporting these industries were plenty of craftsmen. In the 1880s Coltishall had four blacksmiths as well as shoemakers, thatchers, basketmakers, wheelwrights, malt shovel makers and harness-makers. There were nine pubs, a cottage hospital, four churches, even a volunteer fire brigade. Cattle markets were held once a week beside the railway station.

Coltishall's involvement in commerce goes back a long way. The Romans had a settlement here in the area now known as Church Close. They used the river to trade between larger settlements at Burgh-next-Aylsham and Burgh Castle. The Anglo-Saxons lived here. The Anglo-Saxon family names of Coc and Coker have been linked to the village which appeared as Cokereshala and Coketeshala in the Domesday Book. The village was later known as Cowteshale, Coltsale, Coultsale, Couteshall and Coulteshall before settling down to its present spelling in the 17th Century.

In 1231 Henry III granted a charter to Coltishall, conferring certain privileges on its inhabitants. It effectively released villagers from the bonds of serfdom. The historian Blomefield regarded the charter as a great honour, but was at a loss to explain why Coltishall should have been singled out for such special attention.

The Parish Council wish to thank the author Richard Bond for this article, originally published in the 2010 Parish Plan. Richard's Book 'Coltishall - Heyday of a Broadland Village' (out of print) by Poppyland Publishing has much more information on Coltishall and Great Hautbois

Hidden Coltishall and its Hamlets



This walk begins outside the Pharmacy in Coltishall High Street (A).

1. From the Pharmacy, note the largely Victorian buildings of the High Street, (B) and then head South passing the Blacksmiths Yard (C) towards the “Piece of Cake” tea rooms. This building was once the site of a maltings (D)
2. Cross the road and go through an archway to the left of the Tea Rooms, to enter Church Close. Turn left and follow the Close up. Old House (E) is visible as you pass Church Close entrance.
3. At the end of the Close, keep left and take the path through woods, emerging opposite a gate into the Churchyard. Enter the Churchyard. In February, this is full of drifts of snowdrops.
4. Pass South of the Church (F) and turn right as you exit to the main road at the end of the Churchyard.
5. Cross the road and continue on for around 50yds, before turning left up Chapel (G) Lane. Proceed to the end and follow the track right passed the allotments.
6. The track soon turns into a path across fields and descends gently towards the hamlet of St James, and its Old Hall (H). Ignore the path coming in from the right.
7. At the end of the track opposite the Old Hall, turn left and follow the road round. Turn left up Hill Road, and follow the winding road up to a railway bridge. The depression that you are circumnavigating was once a chalk pit (I).

8. Follow the road round to the left (ignoring the track that goes straight on) until you come to the busy A1150. Cross the road and then bear right and right again into North Walsham road.
9. After 50yds follow the fingerpost across Ling Common. At the end of the Common, pass through a gate and join a path straight on beside a field which descends gently to the hamlet of Great Hautbois (pronounced "Hobbis".)
10. At the end of the path you will find a complex junction. Turn right, then immediately left and join a road leading to a railway bridge. The buildings by the junction are Grove Farm (J). Go through the arch to enter Great Hautbois.
11. Immediately turn left, before the lake, to ascend the steps up to the track of the Bure Valley Railway. Turn right.
12. Follow the railway for 200yds until you find a road bridge. Climb the steps and turn right onto the road. Here you have good views over towards Horstead.
13. Follow the road down to another main road. A small diversion is made here by crossing the road and turning right past Church Farm fishery. After about 400yds there is a track on your left down beside some woodland to Theobalds Church (K). Follow this track until you reach the ruins, on your right.
14. From here you can also see the site of Hautbois Castle (L). Now largely subsumed into the fishery, it is possible to imagine the keep sitting on the island surrounded by its squared moat.
15. After exploring the extensive ruins return to the road, turn right and retrace your steps past Holy Trinity church (M) and thence return to Coltishall High Street where your journey began.
16. The grand building opposite where you emerge is Grove House (N) and the building next door bears a blue plaque (O).

A. Antiques Emporium and adjoining house

A mid 19th century red brick showroom and adjoining house with a large 19th century double-fronted projecting window.

Showrooms and attached house. Mid 19th century, built of red brick with slate roof. 2 storeys. Showroom, 5 windows, with double fronted 19th century projecting window with central recessed glazed door with glazing bars. Irregular first floor fenestration of sash windows with glazing bars and flat gauged brick arches. 2 windows have margin lights. House to right, 2 windows, with entrance door to left, in double revealed opening with semi-circular gauged brick arch. 6 panel door with fanlight with glazing bars. Sash windows with glazing bars and flat gauged brick arches. Timber modillion cornice, central stack and gable stack to right.

B. Coltishall High Street.

Comprises a contemporary collection of buildings, evocative of a mid-Victorian high street. Spot:

Terrace of three early 19th century red brick cottages now in use as two houses and a shop.

May 1984. Listed, Grade II. Three terraced cottages, now one house and house and shop. Early 19th century, built of red brick with pantiles. Two storeys. Each house, one window and entrance door. Entrance door to left, paired with through passage door. Timber doorcases with moulded pilasters, patera stops and cornice. Sash windows with glazing bars and segmental brick arches. First floor left hand window is without glazing bars. Timber bracketed eaves. Two chimney stacks at rear. Wrought iron forecourt gates and railings on dwarf brick wall attached to facade.

Mid 19th century house, with a Doric door with pilasters and a projecting cornice.

Mid 19th century. Red brick, slate roof. 2 storeys 2 bays. Door to left with fanlight in Doric doorcase with pilasters and projecting cornice. Casement windows under flat arches. Timber eaves brackets. Central axial stack.

An early 19th century red brick house with a pilastered doorcase.

House, early 19th century, built of red brick with black pantiles. 2 storeys. One window. Entrance door at left, with 4 panel door. Timber doorcase with moulded pilasters, patera stops and cornice. Sash windows with glazing bars and segmental brick arch on ground floor. Bracketed timber eaves. Gable stack.

C. Blacksmith's Yard

A late 17th century brick house that was extended in the 18th century. The house has a lobby-entrance plan and 18th century wrought iron windows.

D. Coltishall Maltings

19th century malthouse. Redeveloped into housing. Surveyed in 1978, most original features still intact, except the chimney above the kiln which was removed during the Second World War. The first floor was also strengthened during this period as the building was used as a canteen.

E. The Old House with boundary walls

An early 18th century house with four giant pilasters channel (rusticated) and a panelled pediment. Early 19th century extension to east. Tall parapet hiding very unusual roof of 5 small gabled roofs, parallel and visible to rear. Very good interiors including stair with iron twist balusters on open string. A lot of raised and fielded panelling. Boundary walls to rear with bee boles.

F. St John the Baptist's Church, Coltishall

A medieval parish church, with Late Saxon work in the nave walls, which also incorporates Roman bricks. The church dates mainly from the early 14th century, and was restored in the 19th century.

Saxo-Norman north nave wall with two circular windows, a blocked round headed door, and much Roman brick. Main body of church dates to about 1300, (S1) states that the church was dedicated in the 1280s, which would make this an important and early example of Y tracery.

Tower and porches added in late 15th century, again an important dated example. Overall restoration from 1865 to 1877. Contains a large number of grand 18th/19th century monuments; Norman font. Good churchyard.

G. Chapel Lane

The sites of several ring ditches and circular enclosures are visible as cropmarks from aerial photographs. A cropmark of a hut circle, dating from the Bronze Age or the Iron Age, is visible within one of the circular enclosures. Also note **Coltishall United Free Methodist Chapel** dated 1878. This chapel has a gabled front and rounded windows and is now a private house.

H. Old Hall, St James

A 17th century manor house, substantially altered in the 19th century. Great house, listed as former manor house. 19th century with a 17th century core.

Main block, H shaped, is early 19th century; pedimented wings with pilasters, and central pediment above main east door. Projecting asymmetrical north block has a 17th century five light ovolo mullioned window.

I. Chalk Pit

A Roman inhumation, along with brooches, coins, buckles, pottery and other metalwork were found at this site in 1827.

J. Grove Farm, Great Hautbois

A farm complex, probably dating to the mid 19th century, with an elaborate timber framed granary and cartlodge, as well as barns, stables and other farm buildings. The farm building complex was recorded in 2013 ahead of conversion to residential use.

K. St Theobald's Church, Great Hautbois, Coltishall

A parish church, dating to the 11th century, with later medieval alterations. The early Norman walls also contain Roman bricks. The church is now in ruins except for the chancel. The churchyard remains in use.

This record is to accompany the proposal for repair and consolidation of the ruin and the memorial chapel. The site is adjacent to Hautbois Castle (See 7679) which was built in the early 14th century by Sir Robert Bainard. The site has 11th century north and west wall of nave with contemporary part of north wall of chancel. The battered round tower was an addition of early 12th century. Chancel extended and south transept added in early 13th century. This became the east end of a wide 14th century aisle, (clear change in fabric), with a 2-bay arcade. Ruinated at time of construction of replacement church in 1862 (see 7702). The chancel has an early 19th century king post roof with raking struts. The font with its complex interlace decoration has been moved to the new church. Very isolated site.

Secret tunnel

The most unlikely legendary tunnels are those which pass beneath rivers. So it is here, with the river Bure standing between two churches 600m apart. Horstead's church of All Saints (TG262199) is supposed to be linked with the now mostly ruined St. Theobald's (TG261204) at Great Hautbois, in the parish of Coltishall. Source: <https://coltishallgroupofparishes.wordpress.com/st-mary-a-k-a-st-theobald-hautbois/>

L. Hautbois Castle:

A medieval castle, built in the early 14th century. The foundations of buildings survive on a sub-rectangular platform, with a bailey and moat to the southeast. The ditches around the site are narrow and probably not the original moat in their present form, though that on east is crossed by a flint causeway only accessible now from interior.

Island is banked high especially on north and west where the ditch is some way from the slope.

Foundations of flint walls in good condition along ditch on southeast, poor on west; no traces of buildings within.

Raised area to east probably a bailey.

A monastic hospital founded in 1235 possibly stood at first on the site.

Golden Gates Pond

The hamlet of Great Hautbois is now part of Coltishall parish, and here in the marshes beside the river Bure can be found the sparse earthwork remains of Hautbois Castle, built in 1312 (TG261203), possibly on the site of a Roman villa. Originally just a manor house, it was later found necessary to fortify it. Local tradition states that the castle once had 'gates of gold', which the castle's owner had removed during a time of trouble, and dropped into a nearby pond until the danger had passed. Unfortunately, another tale says that the pond was bottomless, and so the gates still lie in the depths of what became known as Golden Gates Pond. (Said to be the pond shrouded in trees beside the Great Hautbois Road at TG261207).

Source: 'The Marlpit' Community News Magazine, Aug-Sept 2002.

M. Holy Trinity Church, Great Hautbois, Coltishall

A parish church, built in the late 19th century in the Gothic Revival style of 1864 by Thomas Jeckyll, and the only surviving example of late 19th century transfer glass in Norfolk. Contains font from medieval church and chalice with a 12th century font from St Theobald's, the medieval parish church.

The original plans for Great Hautbois were for restoration and re-seating of the old round-towered church of St Theobald, but by 1862 these plans had been superseded by a commission to build a new church. However, the new church designed by Jeckyll was built at minimal cost: in total less than £1000 was spent. Both the nave and chancel have barrel-vaulted ceilings, and the chancel ceiling has diamond-pattern ribbing and is painted dark blue with gold stars. Carving is minimal in the interior, with the exception of the corbels on the chancel arch. Jeckyll wished for chairs rather than pews or

benches, but the parishioners objected, and at the time of the consecration the old pews from St Theobald's church were in use in the new church, and no pulpit, communion table or lectern had yet been provided.

N. Grove House

A large red brick house that dates mainly to the 19th century but which is probably built around an earlier core. The house has a central two-storey porch and recessed brick panels containing stone coats-of-arms.

Shortly after the survey, most of the eastern half of the building was demolished and the site redeveloped as housing.

O. Milne-Shaw Seismograph

Once the location of a Milne-Shaw seismograph. Note the blue plaque on the building nearby Grove House.