**Texts in the History of Nineteenth Century Suffolk Farming**

Richard Glass

**Introduction**

This article aspires to be a digest of primary sources in nineteenth century Suffolk agriculture, involving a range of genres, dates, places and topics, plus subsequent secondary works. Previous compilations of this nature have become unavailable, superseded, or both.[[1]](#footnote-2) To promote the *local* in local history, a source map places Diaries, Farmer’s Clubs, Oral Histories, and Parliamentary Papers in their parish of origin. A square bracket reference number in the text will lead you from a source to a parish on the map, or vice versa. Specific content may be noted if, for example, a diarist identifies agricultural labourers by name. Archive references and academic citations are provided, plus notes on availability at Bury St. Edmunds, Lowestoft, Ipswich record offices (SRO/B/L/I) or elsewhere. It is hoped this structure will meet the requirements of historians involved in exploring the location and chronology of farming phenomena. All sources have been evaluated for their relevance to local research, as have the bibliographies of suggested academic texts, such as *The Victorian Countryside* or volumes six and seven of the *Agrarian History of England and Wales*, which all help illuminate the wider picture.[[2]](#footnote-3)

Suffolk Archives booking system enables discussion with specialist staff, guarantees a desk and internet access to specialist subscriber services. Increasingly, printed sources can also be read online at home thanks to free digital libraries such as the Internet Archive. The Archives and Records Association provide a single membership card for Norfolk, Essex, and Cambridgeshire Record Offices. Articles published by the Suffolk Local History Council (SLHC) and the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History (SIAH) are indispensable. An attractive paradox of local history is that strange distant phenomena come to resemble familiar features. For example, the concerns and pressures which faced previous generations of farmers seem to have endured, evolved or reappeared, in the issues facing food producers, custodians and consumers today, across the regions of Suffolk.

The Suffolk landscapes of Breckland, Fen, Broad, Coast, Sandling, Clay, and Chalk, placed specific demands upon the nineteenth century farmer, which led to the development of regional specialisms. The imperative in Breckland was to improve soil stability and fertility, and in the Fens to manage water levels. The Broads required expert marsh grazing, and Coast communities combined farming with maritime transport and fishing. Soil structure and fertility on the Sandling required ongoing improvement, on the Clay subsoil drainage was a necessity, whilst farmers on Chalk constantly worked to regulate soil alkalinity/acidity. Easy though it is to become immersed in the accumulated, time-place specific, historic material in documenting the exertions of our agrarian predecessors, the wider region or era is also addressed, in the form of crop and livestock diseases, insect damage, water quality, and soil fertility, mechanisation, wages, taxation, and party politics.

Useful reference works might be, Thirsk’s *Suffolk Farming*, Steward’s *Suffolk Bibliography*, and Martin’s *Atlas of Suffolk*, along with Young’s *Suffolk 1813, White’s Suffolk 1844*, Raynbird’s *Suffolk 1849 and Owners of Land in Suffolk 1873.*[[3]](#footnote-4)All available at Suffolk Archives and (apart from the atlas) free to view and search at Internet Archive or Google Books.

**Topical and Regional Websites**

Suffolk Resources.

<https://heritage.suffolk.gov.uk/parish-survey-introduction>

[www.suffolkinstitute.org.uk](http://www.suffolkinstitute.org.uk)

[Articles - slhc.org.uk](https://slhc.org.uk/articles/)

[Suffolk Records Society | Committed to producing books that bring Suffolk’s rich historical literature to a wider audience](https://suffolkrecordssociety.com/)

[Welcome to Suffolk Archives](https://www.suffolkarchives.co.uk/)

[Suffolk Artists - Home](https://suffolkartists.co.uk/)

[Visit The UK's Only Food Museum For A Great Day Out](https://foodmuseum.org.uk/)

East Anglian Landscape Resources.

[www.brecsoc.org.uk](http://www.brecsoc.org.uk) Breckland Project.

[The Brecks from Above (breakingnewground.org.uk)](http://www.breakingnewground.org.uk/our-projects/a-future-for-all/the-brecks-from-above/) Breckland History and Archaeology.

[About - The Suffolk Project](http://thesuffolkproject.co.uk/about/) by Richard Allenby-Pratt.

[User Guide | Landscape East (landscape-east.org.uk)](http://www.landscape-east.org.uk/user-guide) East Anglia Landscape Types.

[Historic Landscape Characterisation: a Tool for Understanding and Managing Whole Areas | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/research/methods/characterisation/historic-landscape-characterisation/)

Academic Resources.

[British Agricultural History Society - for the study of rural history, countryside history and landscape history (bahs.org.uk)](https://www.bahs.org.uk/)

[Historical Geography Research Group | A study group of the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (hgrg.org.uk)](https://hgrg.org.uk/)

[Historic Farmsteads: Preliminary Character Statement - East of England region | Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-farmsteads-preliminary-character-statement-east-of-england/)

UK Resources

[Map images - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)](https://maps.nls.uk/) Georeferenced Historic Maps

[www.gracesguide.co.uk](http://www.gracesguide.co.uk) Historic records of UK engineering companies.

[Discovery | The National Archives](https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/)

[Visit us in London or Yorkshire and discover more - The British Library (bl.uk)](https://www.bl.uk/visit)

[Parliamentary Papers - Parliament Archives](https://archives.parliament.uk/online-resources/parliamentary-papers/)

**Digitised Texts**

*British Newspaper Archive (BNA)* is a tremendous storehouse of historic newspapers, local and national, which is free to use at Suffolk Archives.

*LIBRAL* at The British Agricultural History Society offers free access to digitised periodicals and books, including authors of Suffolk interest such as Arthur Young, William Rainbird, Rider Haggard.

*JSTOR* offers free access to one hundred articles per month (register as an *independent researcher*) from a wide range of sources.

*Biodiversity Heritage Library* (BHL) provides free access to works in Agriculture including *The Farmer’s Magazine* 1837 to 1880, which contains reports of farming activities in Suffolk market towns.

*The Internet Archive* contains a huge amount of digital text, including nineteenth century works of British agriculture and some recent academic texts.

*Google Books* provides access to leaflets and pamphlets not available elsewhere.

Digitised services can be searched by title or keyword.

**Bibliographies, Atlases, and Source Books**

Valuable tools, most available at county archives and/or The Internet Archive.

Bibliographies and Atlases.

A.V. Steward. *A Suffolk Bibliography.*[[4]](#footnote-5) Free to view on Internet Archive. Buy from Suffolk Record Society or Boydell Press. Indexed by place name, family name, trade.

Stuart Raymond. *Suffolk A Genealogical Bibliography*.[[5]](#footnote-6) Internet Archive.

David Dymond and Edward Martin. *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk.*[[6]](#footnote-7)

Elizabeth Darroch and Barry Taylor. *A Bibliography of Norfolk History*.[[7]](#footnote-8)

Peter Wade Martins, Jane Everett, Philip Judge. *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk.*[[8]](#footnote-9)

Frank Salisbury, *The Victoria History of the History of Essex; Bibliography: Supplement.[[9]](#footnote-10)*

Tont Kirby and Sue Oosthuizen*. An Historical Atlas of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.[[10]](#footnote-11)*

George Fussell. *Agricultural Bibliography.*[[11]](#footnote-12)Indexed by topic, title, author, year.

Tony Copsey, *Suffolk Writers,* author index, *Suffolk Booktrades,* location and name index. [[12]](#footnote-13)

Joan Thirsk and Joan Imray. *Suffolk Farming in the Nineteenth Century.*[[13]](#footnote-14) Free to view online at Suffolk Record Society & Internet Archive.

Peter Hopper. *Suffolk’s Historic Farms.*[[14]](#footnote-15)

Peter Edwards. *Farming Sources for Local Historians.*[[15]](#footnote-16)

Peter Edwards*. Rural Life: Guide to Local Records.[[16]](#footnote-17)* Internet Archive.

Charles Jewell & Henry Stevens. *Victorian Farming. A Sourcebook*.[[17]](#footnote-18)

Elspeth Moncrieff, Iona Joseph & Stephen Joseph*. Animal Portraits.*[[18]](#footnote-19)

Christiana Payne*. Images of the agricultural landscape.*[[19]](#footnote-20) *Internet Archive*

Christiana Payne*. Rural Simplicity: Scenes from Cottage Life in Nineteenth-Century Britain.[[20]](#footnote-21)*

**Farm Records and Diaries**

Diaries provide a unique, subjective perspective, which if combined with macro data, such as Census records, can raise the strength of a project. All texts listed under this heading are available at Suffolk Archives, by arrangement. Numbers in square brackets [1] refer to the source map.

SRO/I/HC423, *Newstead family diaries and accounts*, 1860s, 1890s, 1900s. Laxfield and Rickinghall area, various farms named, Newton Hall, Manor, Waters. Diary of a farm pupil, labour accounts, crop records, livestock movements. [46]

SRO/I/HD1841/3/1, *Diary of Gooderham of Monewdon*, 1869-1871.[[21]](#footnote-22) Details of malt, barley, wheat, customers, threshing, yields, stacks/cartloads, Lists 22 customers by name. [1]

SRO/I/P644/7, *Diary of James Barber of Fressingfield, 1801*.[[22]](#footnote-23) Goes to markets and appointments in Harleston and Halesworth, buys a threshing machine from J. Thurston, performs contract threshing locally, belongs to a book club and an association of some sort, pays Mrs. Motts for club expenses, has a social visit with the Girling family. [2]

SRO/I/JA1/59, *Diary of Richard Girling of Henham* 1837-1855.[[23]](#footnote-24) Details the buying and selling of sheep and cattle, turnips infested with insects, cattle plague, experiments with hay, manure, drainage, benefits of sowing wheat after peas. Mentions Lord Stradbroke’s shooting party, Norwich and Halesworth cattle markets, wheat prices and import tariffs. [3]

SRO/B/HD1720/22, *Diary of G.H. Nayler of Icklingham* 1881-1899.[[24]](#footnote-25) Gives carting costs of, turnips, chalk, hay, sand, stones. Records crop rotations and farming techniques. Nayler travels to Mildenhall and Newmarket for business. [4]

SRO/I/HD1375/2, *Diary of S. Ray of Clare*, 1855-1857. [[25]](#footnote-26) A devout Anglican’s record of religious thoughts, social visits, with a few comments regarding agriculture such as the problems of straying livestock, and sowing fields. [5]

SRO/B/HD1322/2, *Diary of William Biddell of Lavenham*, 1844-1847. William (farmer, land agent, MP) records details of agriculture and related current affairs topics, Westminster speeches, problems of food supply, famine, transport costs, crop yields, sugar cultivation. Includes press cuttings from The Mark Lane Express, Morning Chronicle, and The Times. [6]

SRO/I/HD824/1, *Diary of Robert Hammond of Brockford Green*, Wetheringsett, 1853-1856.[[26]](#footnote-27) Details of weather, payments, names of a dozen workers, social and family events. List of bills; drapers, shopkeepers, merchants, traders, taxes, rates, threshing, patriot fund, bridle, seeds, interest, loans, butter, horse expenses. [7]

SRO/I/HA193/A3/1, *Farmer’s Diary, Middlewood Green*, Earl Stonham (possibly Moat Farm).[[27]](#footnote-28) 1906, rotations, varieties, cost of crops and livestock. Detailed accounts of drainage costs, itemised invoice from William Buckle and Sons. 1926, ploughing and draining using a traction engine owned by Mr. Chappell, and a tractor. [8]

SRO/I/HA28/50/23/1/8/12, *Account Book for New Granary* 1836-1874. Includes records of grain trade; customer, price, quantity, date, profits calculated. Names of fields, acreages, crops for each year. Names of the thirty men and boys employed, wages, perks, terms of employment, tasks. Similar levels of details for Knight’s Granary, Quay Granary, Chaise, and the barn, Sudbourne Farm, Ludham Marshes, Blaxhall House harvest. Costs of seeds, auction results corn and flour, Tare sales. Harvest details for period 1854-1877, wholesale/retail details for period 1836-1843. Includes a list of the forty-five customers who bought or sold grain, and accounts for lodgings for a ship’s boy, and labour to transport goods across “the beach”. Diarist may be Robert Burleigh of Melton/Woodbridge, see White’s 1844 pages 145 & 147. [9]

SRO/I/HD/2021, *Diary of A Lady of Wickham Skeith*. Household accounts, family news, visits, weather, illnesses, information from newspapers. [10]

SRO/I/S/92/KIN, *Diary of Thomas King of Thelnetham* 1804-1838.[[28]](#footnote-29) Details of metalwork, carpentry, church bells, and windmills around Bury St. Edmunds and West Suffolk. Records of unusual weather conditions. Mentions commons and enclosures, public executions and suicides. [11]

SRO/I/S/1/8/3/1 & S/1/8/3/2, *Diary of Samuel Chilton Gross*. 1829-1842.[[29]](#footnote-30) Makes regular visits to Wickham Market, Ipswich, and London, selling wheat, rye, carcasses. Names wheat and vegetable varieties. Mentions friends, neighbours, traders, customers, landowners, and farmers by name. Samuel Chilton Gross farmed at Pettistree and Alderton. Sparrowsnest.co.uk, the Gross/Woolnough/Chilton family website is full of detail. The Gross and Barthrop families were connected by marriage, S.C. Gross junior works for Nathaniel Barthrop, maybe as a grain dealer, and was to later farm at Bawdsey in his own right. Much mention of sheep and horses. Barthrop is inconsistently spelled in the records, sometimes *h omitted*, *o* and *r* transposed, *p doubled*, *e terminal,* which complicates research, but his farming activity is worth looking into. [12]

SRO/B/HC502/37, *Farm Account Book of Ernest William Green of The Grove, Wissington*, 1884/1885.[[30]](#footnote-31) “E.W.G. Wiston” (midway between Hadleigh, Colchester, Sudbury) gives details of business with farmers and blacksmiths, including labour account, duties described, payments made, tradesmen’s bills, livestock, animal feed, wheat, and barley sales. [13]

SRO/B/HC549/1, *Memoranda and Account Book of Alfred Bird of Blooms Hall Stansted*, 1872-1885.[[31]](#footnote-32) [14]

SRO/I/HB54/E/20/19, *Diary of Rev. John Edgar* *of Felixstowe House*, 1840 & 1842.[[32]](#footnote-33) Includes notes on weather, social calls, farm activities, his health, and wine cellar stock. [15]

SRO/I/HA424, *Diary of Joseph Barham of Middleton*, 1869-1923.[[33]](#footnote-34) Record of work as gardener, grocer, draper, and farm worker, in and around Middleton, East Suffolk. [16]

SRO/B/317/1, *Cullum Commonplace Book*, 1783 to 1831.[[34]](#footnote-35) Compiled by Sir Thomas Gery Cullum, of Hardwick House Bury St. Edmunds, this remarkable scrapbook of cuttings and manuscript notes covers a wide range of national and local current affairs. Identifies members of the Suffolk Club (landowners and agriculturalists) at Thatched House Tavern, St. James’s, London. [17]

*The Diary of a Working Farmer: Being the True History of a year’s Farming in Essex.* Primrose McConnell published a series of farming instruction manuals whilst making a business success of a derelict farm near Ongar, Essex. His Agricultural Notebook of 1883 has never been out of print and remains the standard textbook for agricultural students. His diary relates how he succeeded during economic depression. [[35]](#footnote-36)

*Diary of a Poor Suffolk Woodman, William Scarfe*. Edited by P. Wright, J. Wright and L. Robinson.[[36]](#footnote-37) This journal provides rare insight into labouring life in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Details daily family and village life, elements of his vocational life and resisting a landowner’s attempt to recruit him as farm manager. [45]

*Diary of a Suffolk Farmer’s Wife, Elizabeth Cotton,*1854-1869, edited by Sheila Hardy.[[37]](#footnote-38) Elizabeth Cotton (1819-1892) wrote and illustrated a journal of social and commercial life, when living at Amor Hall, a tenanted farm on the Washbrook-Copdock estate of the Tooke Hale family. The impact of Ransome’s of Ipswich and Garret’s of Leiston on the technology of agriculture and transport is recorded. Elizabeth’s drawing of Amor Hall farmyard, first hand evidence of its layout prior to modernisation in the 1850s, provides an ideal basis for further research. More of her artwork work can be seen on the Suffolk Artists website. [42]

*The Diary of Rev. John Longe of Coddenham, 1765-1834*.[[38]](#footnote-39) Richard Wilson’s edited edition contains useful indexed lists of people and places, as well as critical commentary. Rural rectors were responsible for church farmland, and tithes, and therefore functioned as land managers themselves. [18]

*A Frenchman’s Year in Suffolk.* Edited by Norman Scarfe.[[39]](#footnote-40) The Rochefoucauld brothers’ record of their 1784 trip to East Anglia contains detailed observations of landlords, tenants, labourers, livestock, farmer’s clubs, in addition to social clubs, dinners, and English culture. The brothers lodged with Professor Simmons of Morton Hall, Bury St. Edmunds and became close friends with Arthur Young of Bradfield, Bury St. Edmunds. [19]

*The Oakes Diaries.[[40]](#footnote-41)* Two volumes, edited by Jane Fiske, detailing the intertwined social, farming, and banking world of James Oakes of Bury St. Edmunds, between 1778 and 1827, with helpful indexes, appendices, and commentaries. [20]

**Farmer’s Clubs and Agricultural Societies**

Charles Poppy created the Ashbocking Farmers’ Club (AFC) East Suffolk, in 1836, the first of its kind, and became known as the father of Suffolk agriculture due, in part, to his long acquaintances with Arthur Young and Allen Ransome [51]. Local farmer’s clubs recruited small tenant farmers, provided agricultural libraries, monthly discussions, competitions, and ran experiments and field trials. Farmer’s Clubs were active in, amongst other places, Wickham Market (WMFC), Hadleigh (HFC), Debenham (DFC), Harleston (HNFC). Their minute books and annual reports contain details of activities and members. Farmer’s club membership overlapped considerably with Felon Prosecution Societies, and the activities of both can be read in Suffolk newspapers. Numbers in square brackets [22] refer to the source map. Subscribers lists of *The Harleston Farmers’ Club Reports,* and Raynbird’s *Agriculture of Suffolk*, provide additional lines of investigation.[[41]](#footnote-42)

The following can be ordered in advance at Suffolk Archives.

*Wickham Market Farmer’s Club minute book* 1839-1849. SROI/GC407. [22]

*Hadleigh Farmer’s Club minute book* 1839-1843 and *Annual Report* 1841. SROB/GC/544/1/1 & GC544/4/1B. [23]

*West Suffolk Agricultural Association*, SROB/BO1/4. [25]

*East Suffolk Agricultural Association* 1841/1849. SROI/HA11/B1/23/6. [30]

*County Agricultural Society* 1800. SROI/HA14/D1. [29]

*South Suffolk Agricultural Society Prospectus* 1835. SROB/FB61/A/2/1/11. [24]

*Debenham Farmer’s Club*. SRO/I/FB/47/A/1/1. [26]

*Mildenhall Ploughing Club*. *Bury & Norwich Post* (BNP), 27/7/1853. British Newspaper Archive (BNA). [27]

*East Suffolk Chamber of Agriculture.* BNP, 24/12/1867 BNA p.6. SRO/B/L/I

*West Suffolk Chamber of Agriculture.* BNP, 5/11/1867 BNA p.6. SRO/B/L/I

The records listed below are available at the places indicated.

Kevin Fitzgerald. *Ahead Of Their Time, A Short History Of The Farmers’ Club.* Names the committee members and speakers at the London clubhouse in Whitehall, from 1841 to 1967, many of whom were prominent East Anglian farmers.[[42]](#footnote-43) SRO/I/HOLD local studies library.

John Joseph Mechi. *Mechi’s Experience in Drainage.* Tiptree Hall Farm, Essex.Google Books.[[43]](#footnote-44) [59]

Reverend J. H. Groome Rector of Earl Soham. *Defecation and Utilisation of the Sewage Stream*. Google Books.[[44]](#footnote-45) [54]

Eleanor Ormerod. *Reports of Injurious Insects*.[[45]](#footnote-46) Links with membership of the Harleston Farmers’ Club (HNFC), Google Books. [55]

Orlando Whistlecraft. *Meteorology*.[[46]](#footnote-47) [56]

Robert Hughman. *A Rambling Rhyme*. Google Books.[[47]](#footnote-48) [58]

Henry Alexander. *The Soils of East Suffolk considered Geologically*. 1840. Promoted by the East Suffolk Agricultural Association. Google Books.[[48]](#footnote-49)

*Harleston Farmers’ Club Reports* 1838-1849. Google Books.[[49]](#footnote-50) [21]

*East Suffolk Agricultural Association* 1833. Google Books.[[50]](#footnote-51) [30]

*East Suffolk Agricultural Protection Society* 1835. Google Books.[[51]](#footnote-52) [28]

John Gurdon. *Co-operative Farms at Assington Suffolk. Google Books.[[52]](#footnote-53) [43]*

*Cottenham Farmers’ Meeting (CFM) 1850.[[53]](#footnote-54)* Cambridgeshire Record Office Ely, contains what appear to have been winter employment schemes for agricultural labourers, setting of wage rates, and the importance of water management on the fen edge. [48]

**Memoirs and Oral History**

Suffolk benefits from a rich vein of oral histories and memoirs in which agriculture plays a leading role. These authors’ titles, with their focus upon certain times, occupations, or places continue to inspire and inform. Numbers in square brackets [31] refer to the source map.

George Ewart Evans of Blaxhall, East Suffolk, expressed a deep understanding of “the value of recording the memories of the older generations … as an extra source in the study of history...because there had been continuity for centuries in the work, the farming of the land and all the ancillary crafts and occupations”.[[54]](#footnote-55) Each of his ten or so volumes of Suffolk oral history have so much to offer that a review of Evans’ extensive output lies outside the scope of this article, but these comments on four of his works may act as a guide. The three places George Ewart Evans’ lived and worked in Suffolk appear on the Source Map as [31] .*The Farm and the Village* is useful for being structured around specific agricultural processes and vocations plus the further sources named at the end of each chapter. *Ask The Fellows Who Cut The Hay,* involvingseven Blaxhall residents born in the mid nineteenth century, provides detailed descriptions of rural work and family life, further supported by archive sources. *The Days That We Have Seen*, operates at several levels, with chapters one and two expanding on the craft of the oral historian, chapter seven on inns as centres of commerce, and chapter eight on links between fishing and farming. A list of sources on the origins and practice of oral history, on page 220, illuminates Ewart’s methodology. *The Horse in the Furrow,* a homage to the Suffolk Punch heavy horse, its development, employment, and preservation, is achieved through archive sources including the papers of the Biddell family, Playford.[[55]](#footnote-56) [31]

Hugh Barrett (1917-2001) farmer, author, and voice of Radio 4 *On Your Farm* and World Service *Farming Programme* was also known to Suffolk residents as the face of 1960s regional television news. His first volume of memoirs covers his time as a farm pupil in East Suffolk in the1930s and the second as a tenant farmer in West Suffolk and North-West Essex of the 1940s. [[56]](#footnote-57) [37]

Alan Jobson (1889-1980). Of Jobson’s twenty or so Suffolk publications, *Victorian Suffolk* is the most useful for our purpose. It covers details of events, such as rural incendiarism, 1851 Great Exhibition, and agricultural lockout, as well as developments in machinery, sugar beet, and agricultural associations. A notable feature is Jobson’s inclusion of influential individuals, such as Herman Beddell, Allen Ransome, Thomas Crisp, and Richard Garrett. *Suffolk Remembered*, *Something of Old Suffolk,* and *Household and Country Crafts* are also worth investigating for their cameos of village and family life, industry and agriculture. The core of Jobson’s writing is central East Suffolk. [[57]](#footnote-58) [57]

Bert Steward (1897-1993), editor of *The Dairy Farmer* and agricultural correspondent of the *Daily Herald,* published three volumes of memoirs. *One Journey (*written from Mundesley, Norfolk and Green Lane Farm, Stonham, Suffolk) takes us from 1919 through to his retirement, and contains useful material, such as observations on steam plough drainage and manual hoeing on heavy clay in the 1930s, farm unions, politicians, and journalists. “Parson Groome” of Stonham had lectured the Framlingham Farmer’s Club in 1866 and continues to be mentioned well into the twentieth century.[[58]](#footnote-59)The index to *One Journey* names 150 individuals*,* a gift to the researcher.The period between 1936 and 1946 forms *Farm Down* *The Lane*, in which the traditions and rhythms of farm work in High Suffolk are described, as are the changes, such as the rise of sugar beet, ploughing up of pasture and cutting down of hedges. The irony is not lost that fields were being pipe-drained at a time when rural communities had no mains water. The finale has Steward calculating that the renovation of Dumpling Field, by drainage, manuring and hedge removal, had raised corn yield from five sacks per acre to between 14 and 18. The annotated field plan allows the field, farm and village to be identified.*[[59]](#footnote-60)* *Green Lane Farm* contains anecdotal recollections of the people and the animals in Steward’s working life. *[39] [54]*

Ashley Cooper of Bulmer published three volumes of agricultural history, *The Long Furrow,* *Heart of our History*, and *Our Mother Earth*, employing oral history, documentary sources, and secondary texts.[[60]](#footnote-61) He aimed “to push the frontiers forward, by writing of a locality-the Sudbury-Halstead-Hadleigh area-rather than a single specific parish or town… and to provide a base of record office research”.[[61]](#footnote-62) The volumes venture from Roman farm implements to the Common Agricultural Policy, but the principal focus of the three volumes is nineteenth and early twentieth century agrarian activity. [35]

Adrian Bell’s rural writings are considerable, but *The Suffolk Trilogy* is probably the most helpful to the agricultural historian.[[62]](#footnote-63) *Corduroy* openswith Bell’s arrival in West Suffolk as a farm pupil in 1930. Chapter seven describes the atmosphere and emotion of threshing the wheat stack, plus the commercial and social nature of Bury St Edmunds’ December livestock market, where a conversation with a ninety-year-old farming veteran takes the reader to the mid-nineteenth century. The second and third elements of the trilogy, *Silver Ley* and *The Cherry Tree*, continue to contrast current affairs with the rural past, as his farming career took him from the Bury St Edmunds area across to Bungay. [32]

*Many A Summer by* Hardiman Scott relates the life story of farm worker George Everett (1893-1984), in the farms, fields and villages around Boxford, South Suffolk.[[63]](#footnote-64) Plenty of local information and agricultural detail to absorb the historian, such as chapter eight on the plough patterns of Essex and Suffolk, and the work of Arthur Young and Ransome’s of Ipswich. The 1843 Ransome YL plough is observed to be still in use in Boxford in 1914. George’s skills with heavy horses were invaluable in France the following year. [33]

Ronald Blythe. *Akenfield*, a fictionalised compilation of recollections from inhabitants of Charsfield and Debach in the Wickham Market area of East Suffolk, stretches back into the late 1800s. Blythe acknowledges the pioneering oral history work that George Ewart Evans practiced in the neighbouring village of Blaxhall. Blythe’s *Wormingford* series, set amongst the Essex Suffolk farming communities between Sudbury and Colchester, are more of a 20th century diary, but with reflections upon the nineteenth.[[64]](#footnote-65) [34]

**Estate Records**

Estate papers may contain tenancy agreements and maps, correspondence, or financial accounts. As many estates employed managers (bailiffs, agents, or stewards), to mediate between owner and tenant, estate papers are a potentially potent source of information. Edward Bujak’s maps of Suffolk landed estates in *England’s Rural Realms,* can help ascertain whether a farm or village fell within the control of a particular owne*r.[[65]](#footnote-66)* However, estate administration varied in quality, and landholdings altered through time, so the content and location of estate papers is unpredictable. The family and estate collections of Suffolk Archives are catalogued under section HA, alphabetically by surname, so it is important to establish the family names and titles of the owners, in addition to the name of the estate. An obstacle occurs when the landowner employed a lawyer as estate manager, as the records will be deeply buried in the solicitor's archives, only some of which are in the Suffolk Record Office.

**Agricultural Periodicals**

Farming periodicals, published in London but distributed nationwide, carried letters and monthly club reports, forming a valuable source of opinions and practices. Membership lists of the major farming organisations also appeared, usually give name and parish.[[66]](#footnote-67)

Between them *The Farmers’ Journal, The Farmers’ Magazine,* and *The Farmer’s Gazette* provide the widest coverage of regions, years, and topics, and are freely available as fully searchable digital text pages. *Evans and Ruffy’s Farmers’ Journal* (1809-1832) is available at the British Newspaper Archive (BNA) free at Suffolk Archives, as is the *Farmers’ Gazette* (1845-1870). The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) provides free online digital access to *The Farmers’ Magazine* 1839 and 1880. East Anglian fishing/farming links within UK could be investigated through the BNA facility to search Scottish and Irish newspapers.[[67]](#footnote-68) The BNA also offers digital versions of *The Agricultural Advertiser and Tenant Farmers’ Gazette* (1846) and *The Farmers’ Friend* (1850-1855), both of which contain a great deal of political and farming news, endlessly intriguing advertisements, and news stories of shocking farming events such as exploding boilers, barn fires, and rural felonies.

**Local and Regional Newspapers**

Newspapers, helpfully edited to a regular layout, often contain unique records of an event. Early in the period newspapers had a high price and a low circulation and generally comprised four dense pages of type. As the century progressed the advent of the steam press and steel engraving gave rise to less expensive, illustrated, newspapers of many more pages.

Local newspapers can provide details of individuals, places, and vocations, such as ploughing matches, village horticultural shows and livestock competitions. Clubs submitted lists of members and prize winners as part of an annual report, often printed in December or January editions, which can prove useful in tracing individuals and families. Newspapers also carry early indications of agricultural innovations and experiments, farmers’ clubs, and workers’ unions, naming the people and the places involved. Quarter days (March 25, June 24, Sept 29, Dec 25) reveal a concentration of agricultural announcements in local and regional newspapers.[[68]](#footnote-69) These were the points in a year, traditionally, when leases began, rent was due, labour hired, and stock bought or sold. Farm For Sale or To Let notices give names of landowners, tenants, neighbours, and the contents of barns and fields.

Suffolk titles are available for no charge at Suffolk Archives, through the BNA. Consult the “Plan Your Visit” page at the Suffolk Archives website for details of how to book a visit, and a computer. BNA newspapers are digitised and the text fully searchable. This allows for a general search (“Smith labourer Suffolk”) and a more detailed one (“Jones Valley Farm Stowmarket”). These sorts of query can be framed within time scales ranging from a single day up to multiples of fifty years. The results show the whole page so you need to zoom in on your (highlighted) target, but you might then zoom out to assess other items on the page and discover an unexpected gem. The articles selected can be stored and catalogued for later retrieval.

Titles of particularly use in Suffolk local history research are: Bury and Norwich Post (BNP) 1786-1907, Ipswich Journal (IJ) 1720-1902, and Suffolk Chronicle (SC) 1810-1872. Topics involving agricultural communities along the Suffolk borders appear in Cambridge Chronicle 1804-1900, Norwich Mercury 1823-1909, Norfolk Chronicle 1776-1798, Norfolk News 1845-1911, Essex Standard 1831-1900, Essex Herald 1828-1899. The latter part of the period is covered by regional titles including Eastern Daily Press 1870-1911, East Anglian Daily Times 1874-1916, Eastern Evening news 1882-1910.

The British Library has the only known copies of *The Bury and Suffolk Farmers’ Journal*, which for six months in 1844/1845, charted the growing popularity of agricultural organisations, farm machinery and chemicals in editorials, adverts, and correspondence. To read this useful sourceresearchersneed to make an appointment for a readers pass, and order the item, in advance via the British Library website.[[69]](#footnote-70)

**County Agricultural Surveys**

The Board of Agriculture produced County surveys, entitled *General Views*, between 1769 and 1813. Counties commonly had more than one edition, whereby the second included feedback from questionnaires circulated with the first. An *abstract review version*, edited by William Marshall, was published in 1815 and reprinted in 1968. The Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) *prize essay* competition led to a further set of county surveys in the 1840s. East Anglian surveys, summarised in the table, are all on the Internet Archive, LIBRAL, Google Books or BHL.

The volumes of greatest interest to the historian of Suffolk agriculture are Young’s *General View*, Marshall’s *Abstract*, and Raynbird’s *Prize Essay*. Recent reprints of these three texts are available at record offices and digitised versions can be searched at Google Books.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *General View* | *Abstract Volume 3 [[70]](#footnote-71)* | *Prize Essay* |
| Suffolk | Young1794/1813[[71]](#footnote-72) | Pages 404-467 | Raynbird 1849[[72]](#footnote-73) |
| Cambridgeshire | Vancouver 1794[[73]](#footnote-74) | Pages 223-281 | Jonas 1846[[74]](#footnote-75) |
| Norfolk | Kent 1794/6[[75]](#footnote-76)Young 1804/13[[76]](#footnote-77) | Pages 294-403 | Bacon[[77]](#footnote-78) |
| Essex | Griggs[[78]](#footnote-79)Vancouver[[79]](#footnote-80)Young[[80]](#footnote-81) | Pages 468-528 | Baker 1844[[81]](#footnote-82) |

Four single author surveys provide useful period information. In 1850 James Caird published his *English Agriculture,* in which chapters 17-21 deal with East Anglia.[[82]](#footnote-83) Rider Haggard’s 1912 *Rural England* contains reports of East Anglian farming in volume two.[[83]](#footnote-84) *A Pilgrimage of British Farming* by A.D. Hall, 1913,describes Norfolk/Suffolk, Essex, and the Fens in sections 9-11*.*[[84]](#footnote-85)Leonce Lavergne included comments on East Anglian Agriculture in *The Rural Economy* of 1855*.[[85]](#footnote-86)*

Commencing in October 1849 a leading London newspaper, *The Morning Chronicle,* conducted a two-year journalistic survey of ‘Labour and the Poor’ in English counties. Special correspondents Alexander Mackay and Shirley Brooks were assigned to contribute first-hand accounts from rural districts, while Richard Mayhew, and others, took on the Metropolitan and industrial areas. The East Anglian evidence in letters xiv to xxii, recently republished, can now be read together in sequence.[[86]](#footnote-87) The focus is upon unemployment, work and pay, housing and diet, charities and benefits, especially in agriculture, weaving, and fishing. Suffolk labourers, wages, complaints, and rural Incendiarism receive special attention in letters xiv and xv. An index helps the researcher find specific occupations, places or problems. The original articles as published in the *Morning Chronicle* can be read on the British Newspaper Archive at SRO/B/I/L

**Published tours involving Suffolk**

These titles are available at SRO/B/L/I and/or Google Books.

William Cobbett. *Rural Rides*. [[87]](#footnote-88) A record of agricultural observations and opinions from his 1830s tours. His self-proclaimed “harangues” to farmers’ meetings across East Anglia mostly concentrate on taxation, tariffs, and economics, but between venues Cobbett describes what he sees in the fields and on the farms, occasionally interviewing named landowners and tenant farmers. [[88]](#footnote-89) The publication history of *Rural Rides*, originally serialised in his own radical newspaper *The Register*, is somewhat confusing, but the “Norfolk and Suffolk Journal” and the “Eastern Tour” sections can be found at SRO/I/L, the Internet Archive and Google Books.

David Elisha Davy. *Excursions through the County of Suffolk* during 1823-44. [[89]](#footnote-90)

Thomas Cromwell. *Excursions in the County of Suffolk in 1819.*[[90]](#footnote-91)

John Kirby of Wickham Market. *The Suffolk Traveller.1735.*[[91]](#footnote-92)

Daniel Defoe. *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain 1728.*  Excursions which took place between 1724 and 1726. [[92]](#footnote-93)

Celia Fiennes. *Side Saddle in the Time of William and Mary.* A journal of journeys undertaken between1680 and 1700, but not published in full until 1888.[[93]](#footnote-94)

**Essays and Books**

A list of primary sources produced by nineteenth century Suffolk farmers and agriculturalists, all with links to farmer’s organisations in Suffolk, plus secondary sources about their life and work.

John Steven Henslow of Hitcham, Suffolk. A pioneering Cambridge Professor of Geology and Botany and Church of England Rector who, through the Hadleigh Farmers’ Club, introduced the new science of agricultural chemistry to farmers, allotment holders and elementary pupils in Suffolk. Henslow founded Cambridge Botanic Gardens, implemented structured university science teaching and mentored the undergraduate Charles Darwin. [[94]](#footnote-95) [[95]](#footnote-96) [23]

Arthur Young (1741-1820) of Bradfield, Suffolk, prolific writer, energetic organiser, published a considerable number of reports based upon his extensive travels. His General View of the Agriculture of Suffolk 1813, reprinted in 1969, is a good starting point for local history research. Tony Copsey’s *Suffolk Writers from the beginning*, provides some biography and lists sixty works by Young.[[96]](#footnote-97) Young’s farming work has been much dissected, post-mortem.[[97]](#footnote-98) [49]

William and Hugh Raynbird of Grange Farm, Hengrave, Bury St Edmunds. Farming brothers from multiple generations of tenant farmers previously in Thwaite and Beyton, their writing covers labour issues, soil fertility, machinery, and agricultural education/library/clubs. Their works can be read at the Suffolk Archives, or online.[[98]](#footnote-99) [50]

Robert Bond.[[99]](#footnote-100) Kersey Cooper.[[100]](#footnote-101) Cornelius Welton.[[101]](#footnote-102) John Moseley.[[102]](#footnote-103) These farmers all lived and worked in the Wickham Market area, were active in clubs and societies, and put pen to paper for differing causes. Their published works address a range of topics including dairying, labour conditions, tenant rights, economics, and taxation. All can be viewed at Google Books. [22] John Moseley, chair of the WMFC, owned a large agricultural estate at Glemham and was especially productive in his political and economic writings. [61]

Robert Cryloft Harvey and Robert Blyth Harvey. Father and son farmers of Harleston on Norfolk/Suffolk border who were separately active in agricultural organisations, father in political lobbying and son in agricultural improvement.[[103]](#footnote-104) [38]

Charles Poppy. Suffolk tenant farmer of Witnesham, whose enthusiasm for improving agricultural techniques and protecting tenants’ rights can be detected in the letters he contributed to the Farmer’s Magazine, as well as the obituary penned by his long-standing friend, J. Allen Ransome.[[104]](#footnote-105) [51]

Arthur and Herman Biddell. Father (land agent, son in law to J. Allen Ransome) and son (designer) of Playford, East Suffolk, both contributed agricultural essays to White’s Directory, Herman later wrote the agriculture section for the Victoria County History. Linked to William Biddell MP, of Lavenham.[[105]](#footnote-106) [41]

James Allen Ransome of Yoxford and Ipswich, Suffolk. Alongside the agricultural implement manufactory in Ipswich bearing his name which exported farming machinery worldwide, he also, along with Charles Poppy, created and maintained local farmer’s clubs across Suffolk.[[106]](#footnote-107) [52].

John Lawrence of Bury St Edmunds (1753-1839), sometime farmer, writer, and aspiring estate manager. Fussell provides a droll, if not exactly complimentary, account of Lawrence’s output and Copsey lists the known works (some under pseudonyms) on farming, politics, field sports and animal welfare.[[107]](#footnote-108) Lawrence’s two best known works were published in 1801 from Bury St Edmunds.[[108]](#footnote-109)

**Directories and Almanacs**

The earliest useful directory for agricultural research in Suffolk is probably *Pigot’s* 1839, which lists trades and residents of market towns, but not surrounding parishes.[[109]](#footnote-110) The successful commercial directories published by *Kelly, White, Harrods,* and the *Post Office,* soon followed and included data of all parishes in the county.[[110]](#footnote-111) Providing up to date information of traders, merchants and manufacturers, on a parish-by-parish basis, they were republished on a ten-year cycle providing the historian an opportunity to investigate chronological changes and shifting locations of a chosen topic. *Kelly’s* was arranged alphabetically unlike *White’s* which was organised around the Hundreds, both had indexes and contents. Digitised versions are searchable by key word, such as family, occupation, or village. White’s and Kelly’s suffered from copyright and trademark abuses and went to some lengths to protect their reputation, which relied upon their data being up to date and accurate.[[111]](#footnote-112) There is a Kelly’s, White’s, Post Office, and a Pigot’s for each decade between 1840 and 1900, and beyond, at Suffolk Archives, with many digitised online at Internet Archive or Google Books.

John Glyde’s publications, written in Ipswich between 1850 and 1894, providing county wide details of industrial, agricultural, social, and civic groups, can assist the investigation of events, locations, and personnel. Furthermore, *Yearbooks and Handbooks* can help resolve questions of continuity.[[112]](#footnote-113) In addition, John Glyde analysed official statistics such as census returns in his published journalism to present insights into the state of agriculture and the labouring poor of Suffolk.[[113]](#footnote-114)

Handbooks and directories form a useful run of sources, but they improve further by corroboration with independent sources, such as Official Statistics compiled by government departments. The ten yearly Census returns from 1841 and the Tithe Schedules of 1830 and 1840 are pretty much complete in Suffolk providing opportunities to seek supporting evidence for names, locations, occupations, and tenure. A research methodology utilising Directories, Census, and Tithes forms a strong triangulation of sources.

**Recent Academic Texts**

These publications each focus on a specific theme in nineteenth century agricultural Suffolk.

The Agrarian History of England and Wales [AHEW] is the standard reference work in the discipline. Between them volumes six and seven cover the period 1750 to 1914 through every conceivable topic and locality.[[114]](#footnote-115)

*The Victorian Countryside*, edited by Gordon Mingay, presents a range of informative illustrated essays by leading writers, highly relevant to our interests.[[115]](#footnote-116)

Edward Bujak offers an in-depth account of the evolution of Suffolk’s great estates, usefully mapped, providing opportunities for further research. [[116]](#footnote-117)

John Belcher plots the way that four course rotation has been adopted and adapted in East Anglia through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[[117]](#footnote-118)

Susanna Wade Martins & Tom Williamson look closely at the farmers of nineteenth century East Anglia, their influences, methods, and impacts on buildings and the landscape.[[118]](#footnote-119)

Richard Hoyle and a dozen contributors take a wide-ranging look at the farmer in all their guises.[[119]](#footnote-120)

Gordon Mingay puts the farmer into a social and economic context with Suffolk examples.[[120]](#footnote-121)

Michael Turner, John Beckett and Bethany Afton have brought together evidence to assess the changes in crop yields, including a useful list of Suffolk account books on pages 241-2.[[121]](#footnote-122)

The format of John Brown’s *Essex at Work* is a style that could very productively be applied, by local historians, to Suffolk*.[[122]](#footnote-123)*

Nesta Evans’ *East Anglian Linen Trade* demonstrates how the regional impact of a single versatile, but difficult to process, crop, (Flax/ Linseed) was moulded by mechanisation, raw materials, economics, guilds and unions. An example of the intertwined nature of farming and industry. Great maps of Norfolk and Suffolk.[[123]](#footnote-124)

Hadrian Cook and Tom Williamson assess a range of agricultures and locations in their exploration of the land/water relationship, *Water Management.* Heavy clay, fens, and meadows feature highly.[[124]](#footnote-125)

John Beckett brings a welcome concise clarity to the technicalities of farming changein *The Agricultural Revolution.*[[125]](#footnote-126)

*Life as a Farm Worker in Nineteenth Century Suffolk* by Andy Kerridge, of the Suffolk Family History Society (SFHS), gives graphs of useful data and further reading suggestions, as well as sections including politics, economics, crime, and the workhouse. The full text will be uploaded for open access at SFHS website in early 2024.*[[126]](#footnote-127)* SRO/I/HD2272/323/64

In *Hodge’s Politics,* Peter Clark makes a close study of how new voting rights of 1884 impacted upon deference, party politics, and landlord/tenant/employee relations, in a case study of Suffolk farm workers.*[[127]](#footnote-128)*

Smith and Satchell, *Malthus, Poverty and Population Change in Suffolk 1780-1834*, is an in -depth analysis using Malthusian theory, of Suffolk population and economic data from the first half of the nineteenth century. Excellent data mapping at county, hundred, and parish scales. Free to view at SIAH.[[128]](#footnote-129)

*Land Use and Farming in Suffolk about 1840*, by Roger Kain and Harriet Holt, is a tremendous piece of work which allows us to see what farmers were doing across Suffolk, down to the individual parish level. More great maps. Free to view at SIAH.[[129]](#footnote-130)

David Dymond’s article, *Terriers, Tithes and Farming,* demonstrates how church taxes were managed at parish level in Suffolk before tithe commutation of 1836. [[130]](#footnote-131)

**Government Sources**

*Tithe Maps and Schedules* of the 1830s

*Census Returns* 1841, then ten yearly.

*Ordnance Survey Maps* first series 1870s

*Land-Owners Returns* 1873.

Four sets of official statistics that systematically represent all Suffolk parishes. Digitised, they can be accessed at Suffolk Archives free of charge. Record office staff are expert at helping you find what you are after. Tithe records give detail of owners’ and tenants’ holdings, to the level of individual field names and sizes. Census returns provide size and structure of households, occupations, place of origin, and from 1850 size of farms by acreage and employees. The map sources are free to view and search at [Map images - National Library of Scotland (nls.uk)](https://maps.nls.uk/). Return of Owners of Land of one acre and upwards 1873, (contains name, acres, parish) can be found on Google Books, Suffolk is in volume two. Bateman’s *Great Landowners* (Google Books and SRO/L/I/B)is a digest of owners of land above two thousand acres, including names, acres, county, and biographical detail.[[131]](#footnote-132) All are also available by personal subscription to an online genealogy service.

Official statistics can be variously employed. Wade Martins combines official statistics at the county scale, while D.A. Hamilton applies the same type of data (enclosures/tithes/census) to a single Suffolk village location.[[132]](#footnote-133) Roger Kain and the University College London team have produced a monumental standard reference catalogue of Tithe Maps and Schedules.[[133]](#footnote-134)

*Royal Commission and Select Committee Evidence and Reports.*

Verbatim reports of Suffolk farmers in these two types of Parliamentary Papers are stored in the [Parliamentary Papers - Parliament Archives](https://archives.parliament.uk/online-resources/parliamentary-papers/) website, a “subscription service available in universities and large reference libraries”. The most relevant can be seen on paper at SRO/I/HD/2448/42 and SRO/B/HA507/8/3. These are not systematic surveys and do not cover each Suffolk parish. The following place-specific *Parliamentary Papers* are included in the source map. Robert C Harvey and Robert B Harvey of Harleston, father and son, were both deeply involved in farmers’ organisations, and gave evidence in 1821 and 1847, respectively.[[134]](#footnote-135) [[135]](#footnote-136) [38] Robert Cooper, who farmed more than 1,000 acres in Walberswick and Blythburgh, provided evidence in 1836 [40].[[136]](#footnote-137) Four Suffolk farmers, Gayford, Kerrison, Biddell, Manfield, gave evidence in 1882 to the Royal Commission on Agriculture [41].[[137]](#footnote-138) The Pusey 1821 enquiry into Agricultural Customs and Wilson Fox 1895 Royal Commission Report on Suffolk Agriculture are particularly useful.[[138]](#footnote-139) Parliamentary Papers website makes the search for a certain place, person, or theme straightforward. Crop returns became centralized, in 1866 and these are summarised up to 1938 by Butcher in *Land of Britain.*[[139]](#footnote-140)Philip Dodd analysed the 1855 pilot scheme for the Suffolk Institute in 1979*.*[[140]](#footnote-141)The Suffolk element of the important *Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture* Report of 1843 was the subject of a Suffolk Review article in 1965 by David Dymond.[[141]](#footnote-142)

**Conclusion**

Historic sources are by their nature scattered and sporadic, rendering them difficult to trace, and uneven in coverage. This digest cannot claim to be comprehensive but, to ease the search process, has attempted to bring together a range of types of texts from the nineteenth century, to represent varying aspects of Suffolk farming. Included also are academic texts of the twentieth and twenty first century, selected for their more systematic and critical viewpoint. The idea behind the source map was to tap into local historians’ place specific interests, but practical constraints limited its content. To borrow a phrase from a Norfolk County Archaeologist “the map should be seen as a progress report, not as a definitive statement”.[[142]](#footnote-143) Continued research will bring to light further primary sources, extending the texts available and expanding the scope for investigating nineteenth century Suffolk agriculture. In the landscape of our culture and heritage, county history societies and archives are undoubtedly an essential asset of community value.

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