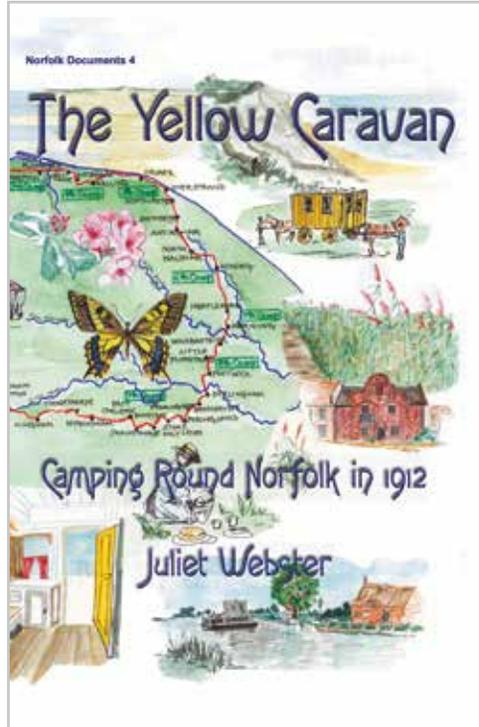


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The Birkbeck family graves in the churchyard of Stoke Holy Cross facing their former home, now demolished, 2019.

Poppyland Publishing is pleased to announce *The Yellow Caravan: Camping Round Norfolk in 1912* by Juliet Webster.

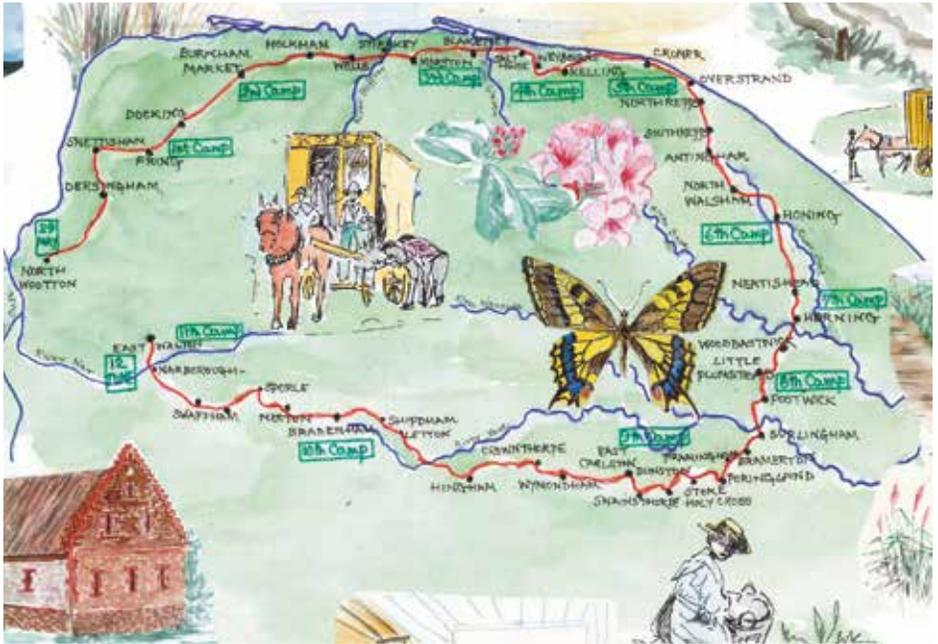
The *Yellow Caravan* is an example of the survival of a unique set of family documents. Given to the author by her cousin, because he knew she “enjoyed sorting paper”, they have been pieced together to tell the story of a unique camping trip taken by sisters Honor and Win Elwes and, their cousin, Judse Birkbeck around Norfolk in 1912. Their accomodation was a brightly coloured bioscope van which had been used as a travelling roadshow showing early films around the county before purpose-built cinemas were constructed in towns.

Honor Elwes recorded their two week holiday in her diary, on her Box Brownie camera, and then wrote a long poem of their experience.

There is something very poignant about this adventure: although they were still very young, for them it was perhaps representative of teenage freedom but with hindsight could be regarded now as something of a ‘last fling’ for our three heroines, because two years later, life would change for ever with the outbreak of the First World War in which they were to lose so many who were dear to them.

Juliet Webster, accompanied by one of Honor’s great nephews, Ben Elwes, a professional photographer, follows the route of the Yellow Caravan in 2019 with paintbrush, camera and notebook. In doing so she manages to capture not only the spirit of the original adventure described in the documents, but also the essence of the county Honor loved, its highways and byways, heaths, marshes and streams, much of which remains the same.





The route taken by The Yellow Caravan can still be followed today.



Unloading a Lynn coal boat at Blakeney. One of the photographs taken by Honor Elwes on her Box Brownie camera in 1912.



Looking across Yare to Surlingham from Postwick. The Ferry House on the other side, 2019.



Photograph taken outside Mr William Bunting's blacksmith's shop in Honing. The same forge is still there today.

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DAY ONE

Mistaken for Suffragettes

Wednesday 29TH May 1912

North Wootton to Fring (11 miles) via Castle Rising, Babingley,
Sandringham Woods, Shernbourne and Dersingham

**We started from North Wootton
On the twenty-ninth of May
With Caravan and horse and man
All ready for the fray.**

**We were all lending helping hands
While the packing was being done,
They dropped the coals upon Win's foot,
"Accident Number One".**

**The van was packed by maid and man
Who cheered to see us go,
The butter had been left behind
But this we did not know
Till the footman caught us up with it
On the road a mile or so!**

A little party of well-wishers had gathered at Home Farm, North Wootton, where Trenny kept horses and vehicles. Honor and Win had driven the six miles from Little Congham in the pony cart. Ted Smith—who helped out at Little Congham with tasks such as the lawn mowing that he shared with Win—followed with the luggage in the luggage cart. This was full to overflowing with supplies for the two-week tour round Norfolk. Whether Trenny had supplied the canvas deck chairs and a tea chest we can only guess. The deck chairs were of the folding wooden rectangular type slung with one piece of canvas, easy to fold and move around (800 identical chairs had been swept into the North Atlantic from the deck of the Titanic only six weeks earlier). Two ladders were supplied, one long



Honor & Judith having breakfast

This captioned photo in Honor's album shows the deck chairs and Harrods' tea-chest used to provide seating and a camp table.

enough for them to access the roof on which to store the folding chairs, which were then covered with a waterproof cloth. A short ladder was also supplied for the travellers to reach the doorway. The Harrods' tea chest is a bit of a mystery. Neither the Congham household nor the Westacre household would have had their tea delivered in chests from Harrods of Knightsbridge. Tea was indeed delivered to both households in thin wooden chests with riveted metal edges and lined with foil but their tea would have come direct from Ceylon where the Elwes family had tea estates. Honor and Win's uncle Dick Elwes had been sent out there at the age of 16 in April 1886 to look after the family tea business and continued to do so well into his 80s. Later, Honor was fortunate enough to visit him in Ceylon three times and kept a diary of her visits. For the Yellow Caravan trip, it is likely that Trenny, being in the house removals business, supplied the tea chest. Trenny may even have acquired it from Queen Alexandra when he moved her possessions about. The Royal Household may well have had their tea delivered from Harrods. Trenny would have had plenty of tea chests for packing and he probably also supplied the basic pots and pans as well as the cauldron and its tripod—as Trenny we know was something of a happy camper himself and well aware of what would be needed for the two-week journey.

By the time Honor and Win arrived at North Wootton, Judith Birkbeck was

already at Home Farm with her mother who had arrived from Westacre with her lady's maid Edith Goymer. Both were waiting to see the Yellow Caravan depart. Honor's Aunt Violet had also arrived from Elder Farm, Grimston, to see the fun. Aunt Violet wrote in her diary that evening:

Went to Wootton to see Honor, Win and Judes start on a fortnight's caravan trip. They did look so happy and the caravan very big and roomy.

It took time to unpack both luggage carts and re-stow everything neatly into the Yellow Caravan. The only accident that morning was Ted Smith dropping the hundredweight (8 stone or 50 kg) sack of coal on Win's foot. It was a quarter to twelve before they left with Charlie Canham leading the horse. *The van was packed by maid and man who cheered to see us go.* Despite the number of helpers, the butter was left out, but Ted Smith ran with it and caught them up on the road before they had gone too far.



The Village Green, North Wootton, where Honor, Win and Judse started their journey around Norfolk, 2019.

The journey starts on the village green at North Wootton by the red telephone box opposite Home Farm—thence turning right along Ling Common Road. Here rural Norfolk begins with tall trees on either side of the road which continue all the way to Castle Rising. Castle Rising was a place so familiar to Honor living nearby at Congham that she does not mention it in poem or diary. Today the village of Castle Rising is beautifully kept and it is a joy to visit—walls, houses and churches here are built in local carstone¹. First time visitors to Castle Rising feel immediately that they have arrived somewhere quite different. The church with carstone walls and Romanesque roofed tower is by no means a typical Norfolk

¹ Carstone is rusty ginger coloured sandstone that extends in a narrow strip northwards to the coast at Hunstanton where it becomes visible in the face of the cliffs below a layer of chalk.

church and, on the opposite side of the road, the Trinity Hospital almshouses, also in carstone, are intriguing. They were built in the reign of King James I by the Howards whose family have resided here since Castle Rising was built in the 12th century. Down a side-road it is possible to catch a glimpse of the great Norman mound of Castle Rising Castle, cared for today by English Heritage. One of the finest stone keeps in Britain is surrounded by 20 acres of massive earthworks. In the centre of the village are cottage garden tea rooms serving coffees, lunches and teas in delightful surroundings.

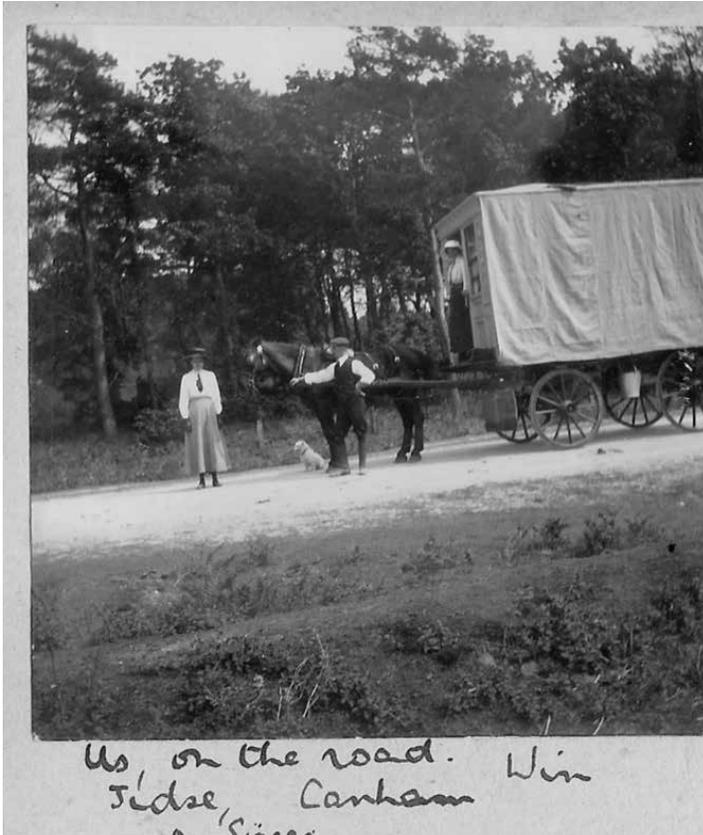
The Yellow Caravan party stopped for lunch on the road between Babingley and Wolferton. Babingley, a hamlet on the Sandringham Estate, is named after the 12-mile long Babingley river that rises in 'Further Back Wood' in Flitcham, and is joined by the even smaller Cong River rising in Congham. Honor does not mention Sandringham by name (but stopping between Babingley and Wolferton tells us she is at Sandringham). Their journey took them through the wonderful woods of Sandringham and past the 'Norwich Gates' of the Royal residence. Today the Sandringham Estate has beautifully equipped camp sites for caravans and tents located in spectacular woodland. The Sandringham Country Park has pathways and walks through the woods and an exceptional visitor centre and gift shop and a restaurant offering



Sandringham Woods, 2019.

first-class meals and service. There is also a museum of royal memorabilia and vehicles. When Honor, Win and Judith stopped nearby for their lunch, they could never have envisaged such wonderful facilities 100 years on or imagined that the journey they had embarked on would be emulated in part by so many thousands of visitors to the county.

Wolferton was the royal station—not exactly on the route, but visitors may want to take a short detour. Between 1862 and 1969 the Royal Train brought members of the Royal Family and their guests here on their journeys to Sandringham. It is now a station without a track and has been lovingly restored as a private house.



**Fring was our destination
So we hurried on ahead
And past thu' Dersingham and bought
Our first new loaf of bread.**

**Through Snettisham village, to the right,
And up a short steep hill,
Canham, the man, persuades the horse
While we pushed with a will.**

Dersingham Bog, on the Sandringham Estate, today has open access and there are many intriguing, well-marked walks through heather, Corsican pines with silver birch trees glinting in between. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and consists of waterlogged peat, woodland and a ridge of dry heath. It is a good

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