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BABERGH Curious History

The Hartest Stone

A limestone boulder, 4ft wide and 3ft high, stands on Hartest village green. One story tells of how it was pulled from Somerton by forty horses in 1713 to mark the end of the War of Spanish Succession.



The Crooked House



The Crooked House in Lavenham, was built in 1395 and is said to be the inspiration for the famous nursery rhyme, "There was a Crooked Man..."

The Lavenham Highway Woman

Margaret Mathew was the daughter of a Lavenham swordmaker. She teamed up with Thomas Rumbold and together they terrorised the roads of Suffolk as highwaymen. She evaded capture unlike her partner in crime who was hanged at Tyburn in 1689.



The Lost Well



The lost well of Elmsett, was a magical spring which had the power to turn objects to stone. North of the village church is a stream and close by was a slope where a mineral spring once bubbled to the surface and was famed for its medicinal properties. It was also noted that it caused crystallisation of objects like Mother Shipton's Cave in North Yorkshire.

Hadleigh Smugglers

In the 18th century, a notorious smuggling gang operated not by the coast but 40 miles inland in Hadleigh, transporting contraband from Leiston to a storehouse in Semer. When authorities seized their goods and moved them to the George Inn, the gang fought back, killing a dragoon guard and injuring others before reclaiming their haul.



Lady Mary the Pirate



Lady Mary Killigrew, born around 1525, was the daughter of Philip Wolverston, a so-called "gentleman pirate", Mary herself actively engaged in piracy until in 1582, she was arrested for receiving stolen goods from a Spanish ship and sentenced to death, but Queen Elizabeth pardoned her, recognizing the Killigrews as valuable allies.

Lady Mary the Pirate



Anne Boleyn's Heart



Anne Boleyn loved nearby Erwarton Hall so much she wished for her heart to be buried there. In 1838, renovations uncovered a heart-shaped lead casket behind a wall. Though it contained only dust, it was reburied in the church's Cornwallis Vault, marked by a commemorative plaque.

The Tattingsstone Wonder

Edward White, Squire of Tattingsstone didn't like the view of two cottages from his home Tattingsstone Place so in 1790 he added a third cottage and finished them to look like a church by adding a fake tower and flint façade.



The Devil's Bells



Work began on the East Bergholt church tower in 1525, but the story has it that the Devil's nifty footwork at night meant that builders eventually lost heart and gave up trying to build towards the heavens, deciding instead to construct a unique timber bellcage in 1531, where the bells are housed to this day.

Simon Tybold of Sudbury



Simon, Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor of England, was despised for excommunicating peasants champion John Ball and introducing the poll tax. Captured by revolting peasants, he was beheaded on Tower Hill, his head displayed on Tower Bridge before being preserved and returned to Sudbury, where it now rests in St. Gregory's Church.



Catherine Foster the Poisoner

Catherine Foster of Acton was hanged in 1847 for poisoning her new husband by sprinkling arsenic on his dumplings. She would probably have got away with murder had it not been for her having discarded the remainder of the meal in garden where the chickens ate it. They died and authorities became suspicious.



The Bures Dragon



First recorded in 1405 by a local monk several Bures townfolk claimed they had seen a dragon roaming nearby. A mob gathered but could not kill the creature that fled down river towards Wormingford. Was it a dragon or in fact an escaped crocodile? A gift to King Richard I during the 12th Century crusades....

