



History:	
Topic:	King Charles II rode through Hargrave (probably)
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Notes:	Pictured, King Charles II on Humphrey Penderel's Mill Horse.

## King Charles II rode through Hargrave (probably)

1660 brought the restoration of the monarchy and King Charles II took the throne. The focus of life turned towards secular rather than sacred. Without the oppressive Puritan rule there was renewed interest in improvements to agriculture, commerce and transport.

King Charles II shared his father's and grandfather's passion for horse racing and was a frequent visitor to Newmarket where he established a palace in 1668 in the High Street. He inaugurated the Newmarket Town Plate race in 1665 and was, and still is, the only monarch to ride a winner at the racecourse in 1671.

One of Charles's closest friends was William Crofts, 1st Baron Crofts of Little Saxham Hall. William had been loyal to Charles throughout the civil war and had joined him in exile in France during the Cromwell years.

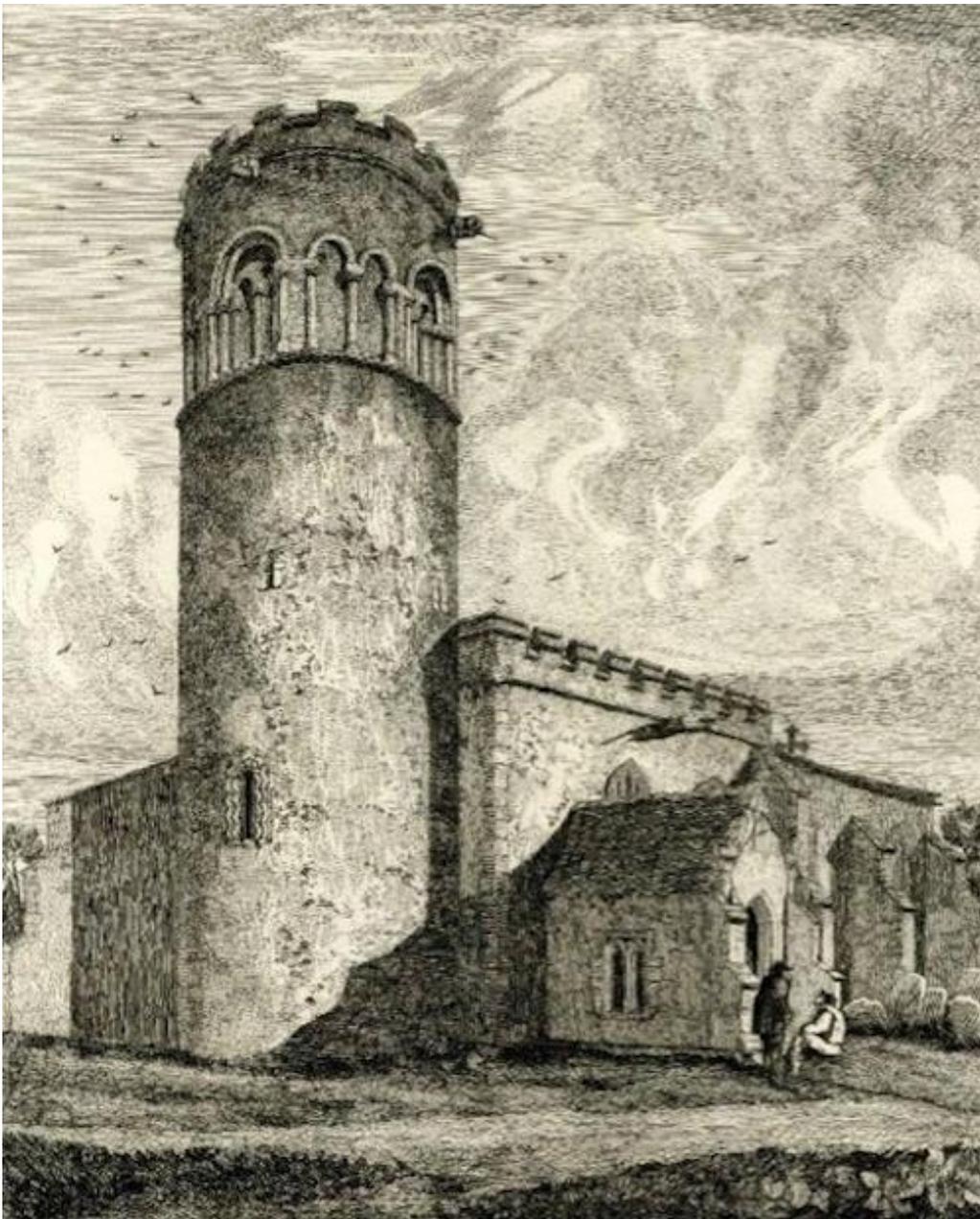


Lady Crofts - Wife of William Crofts,  
1st Baron of Little Saxham Hall.

It is known that Charles stayed with his friend at Little Saxham Hall (now demolished) on at least four occasions and the records suggest the hospitality and entertainment flowed to excess. The famous diarist, Samuel Pepys, accompanied him in 1668, recording:

“That the King was drunk at Saxam.....the night that my Lord Arlington (of Euston) come thither, and would not give him an audience, or could not which is true, for it was the night that I was there, and saw the King go up to his chamber, and was told that the King had been drinking. He tells me, too, that the Duke of York did the next day chide Bab. May for his occasioning the King’s giving himself up to these gentlemen, to the neglecting of my Lord Arlington: to which he answered merely, that, by God, there was no man in England that had heads to lose, durst do what they do, every day, with the King, and asked the Duke of York’s pardon: which is a sign of a mad world. God bless us out of it.”

Pepys had family in Suffolk and was the member of parliament for Harwich. He was present there again in 1670 when Lord Crofts again plied the King with bounteous food and alcohol. The following day, Sunday morning, the King attended Little Saxham church and, perhaps because of his indulgence, is rumoured to have nodded off during the sermon, subsequently asking for the text to be printed.



As anyone planning a journey from Newmarket to Little Saxham on ancient highways knows, the route through Cheveley, Ashley, Ousden and Hargrave is the obvious itinerary to Little Saxham, so King Charles II may well have ridden through Hargrave on these occasions.



Little Saxham Hall was built between 1505 and 1514. It was demolished in 1773, probably as part of the development of the Ickworth Estate. The above photo shows all the evidence that remains of this great house in 2021, the moat and bridge.

**Peter Reddick**  
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