

THE FAMILY OF JOHN BAINES, MASTER MARINER

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This article examines the fortunes of the Baines family in Blakeney from the arrival and settlement of John Baines, together with his acquisition of property under the 1824 Inclosure Act. The family were quintessentially seafarers and their demise follows the decline of the harbour through until the twentieth century when the family name disappeared having survived for just five generations.

Introduction

The discovery of a Settlement Examination for John Baines provides an opportunity to explore the background to his arrival in Blakeney as well as an insight into the factors that may well have determined his attitude towards his marriage and responsibilities as a parent. It also provides a starting point for following his fortunes and those of his family during the nineteenth century, placing the family in a wider social context, and forms part of a study examining the evolution and history of the High Street during this period. A time when families such as Starling, Brereton, Temple, Holliday, Parker, Page, Hudson, Cobon, Beavis, Nicholls, Thompson, Long, Loads and Baines occupied prominent positions in the village as farmers, merchants, traders, mariners, retailers, craftsmen, and fishermen. A few of these families had been resident in Blakeney for several hundred years, whilst others who were more entrepreneurial moved into the area as opportunities arose and others left. Some prospered, while others barely survived, and some failed.

The population of Blakeney at the start of the century in 1801 was standing at 618, a figure that rapidly increased during the next thirty years to 1005 by 1831.⁽¹⁾ At this time there were 215 houses for the inhabitants which was slightly more than double the number recorded in the Ecclesiastical Census of 1770.⁽²⁾ It is interesting that of the 1005 souls listed in 1831, 77 were seamen 'belonging to' various vessels in port; the phrase 'belonging to' is used in the Parish Register, but whether these individuals were living aboard boats at anchor in the harbour or were residents of the village is unclear. The population continued to rise reaching its zenith with 1,108 people living in 297 houses in 1854⁽³⁾ but thereafter took a downward turn with just 807 inhabitants in 1891 living in 188 houses,⁽⁴⁾ virtually the same as the 803 recorded in 1821. The period of significant increase in both people and houses can be correlated with the rejuvenation of the port after the Harbour Improvement Act of 1817 coupled with the promise of a railway link that could have generated further growth and expansion.⁽⁵⁾

John Baines first appears in Blakeney towards the end of the eighteenth century, prior to a population expansion, when he is recorded in the Parish Registers as marrying on 27th December 1791 Sarah Murrell, a daughter of John and Mary Murrell. The Murrells had been resident in the parish since at least the late seventeenth century. Over the succeeding years, this record is followed with entries for the baptisms of 12 children together with the burials of three daughters as infants and one young, unmarried son.

There is nothing unusual in this scenario of family events, but it is the first time that the surname Baines, variously spelt as Banes / Bains / Baynes, appears in the Blakeney Registers since their inception in 1538. Nor is there any mention of a Baines family in the Ecclesiastical Census of the Parish in 1770, in which all adults were named together with a listing of children under the age of 16 in each household; this gave a total of 458 people living in 100 households.

These events indicate that John Baines arrived in Blakeney sometime between 1770 and 1791 and was clearly established in the town (Fig. 1). Indeed, 'settled' is the operative word here. With no legal right to settlement through birth one has to ask where had John Baines come from, what brought him to Blakeney and more importantly, how was he able to stay in the parish? All too often there are no answers to these intriguing questions as people without property usually leave little written evidence of their activities. Fortunately, in this instance there is information in the records of the Overseers of the Poor⁶ who were legally obliged to deal with issues of settlement on behalf of the Parish.

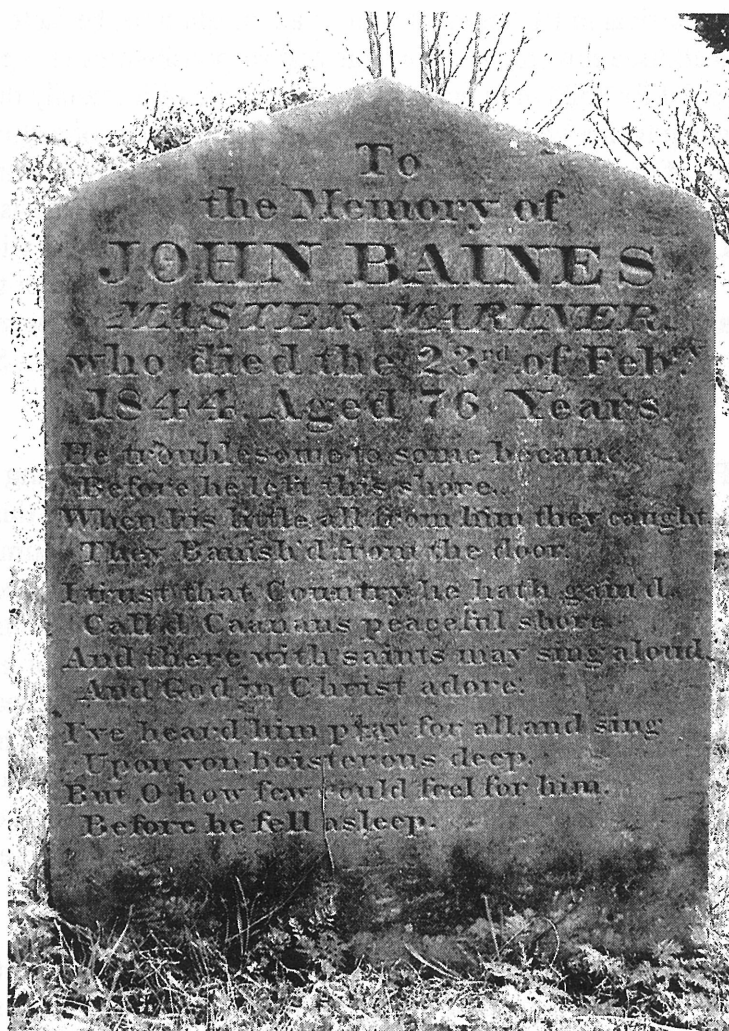


Figure 1

**Headstone in Blakeney Churchyard for John Baines
Master Mariner, who died 23rd February 1844
Aged 76 years**

Parish Responsibilities

During the early part of the nineteenth century parishes like Blakeney were to a considerable degree autonomous for local affairs, having almost total responsibility for matters of church and secular welfare. Churchwardens dealt with the former, namely the upkeep of the church and churchyard, together with the religious and moral aspects of the parish, whilst two Overseers dealt with the latter, including the welfare of the poor together with the responsibility of looking after highways, bridges, water courses and, also, vandalism.⁷ Overseers were chosen from prominent members of the parish and they would both construct an annual budget and finance their work from a rate levied on each inhabitant, the amount being based on an assessment of the value of the property a person occupied. They necessarily kept meticulous accounts of all their business knowing full well that at some future date they might need aid if they fell on bad times. Where these accounts have survived they are usually found amongst the records kept in the Parish Chest, now deposited in the Local Record Office.

Until the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, when responsibility for looking after the poor passed from the parish to the Union, all individuals wishing to settle in a parish were subjected to the long standing and physically draconian Elizabethan and Stuart Poor Law Acts of 1597 and 1601. These Acts made each parish responsible for the welfare of its own poor who were divided into six categories, namely the sick, the aged and orphans, followed by widows, deserted women and their children, then those who were able-bodied but out of work and finally the wanderers and temporary residents.

On the whole, the sick and needy were provided with relief, the unemployed put to work for the parish and the idle sent to a house of correction. So those people who stayed in the parish where they were born or had a right of settlement were assured of having some support in times of trouble and hardship, even though there was considerable variation between parishes in the level of relief provided. However, it was the wanderers and temporary residents who were a cause of considerable concern to parishes and it is easy to understand how these strangers were frequently moved on across the parish boundary so that the parish would not have to bear the financial burden of providing for them.

The poor laws were constantly refined to address the problems of settlement and the Act of Settlement 1662 finally resolved some of these issues. For example, the burden on parishes would be removed if individuals who were moving carried a certificate issued by the parish in which they were last legally settled, often their place of birth, stating that they, the parish, accepted the responsibility of providing for the individual concerned in times of need. This certificate was also, in effect, a passport back to the parish where the individual belonged and consequently was an extremely important document for those moving between parishes, for example, those being hired as servants or labourers.

This Act also set out a list of conditions whereby settlement could be obtained other than by birth in a parish and these were as follows:

- 1 Serving a parish office
- 2 Paying the parish rate
- 3 Being bound as an apprentice by indenture to a parishioner
- 4 Serving a year in service, but only if unmarried
- 5 Being hired as a labourer for a year, which meant a full 365 days
- 6 Renting or owning property worth £10 a year

These options in effect established the contribution an individual made to the community, that is, the parish.⁸ Using these criteria wanderers or temporary residents could, if it was deemed necessary, be questioned or examined before two local Justices of the Peace. If this examination was satisfactory, then a Certificate of Settlement would be issued, whereas an unsatisfactory result would, since the 1662 Act, have given the Overseers the right to issue Removal Orders. These could extend to sending strangers back to their last place of settlement at that parish's expense or even deportation to an overseas plantation.

Certainly by 1795 the Industrial Revolution and hostilities with France inflamed the problems created by the rising population and increasing food prices, and unprecedented numbers of people were forced to move in the search for work and better prospects. Although this continued to put enormous strain on parishes, there was by now a greater degree of tolerance and understanding so that any person arriving in a new parish registered with the Overseers. Though they might still be examined as a precautionary measure, provided they stayed well and healthy and did not claim relief, then removal would not be enforced.

Obviously John Baines came to the attention of the Overseers for he was duly examined as to his place of legal settlement, and fortuitously a record of this examination has survived, but significantly by this time he had been resident in Blakeney for at least 15 years and for some of this time had paid rates to the Overseers! The records of such examinations provide an insight into the minutiae of people's lives, with details of their families followed by a history of their employment, wages and places of abode. In the case of John Baines it certainly tells us where he came from and how he arrived in Blakeney.

The Settlement Examination: a transcription

On 4th April 1806 two of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, J. W. Thomlinson and R. T. Gough, examined John Baines, Mariner of Blakeney in the County of Norfolk ...

Who saith That to the best of his knowledge and belief he is about 42 Years of Age, and was Born as he has been informed and believed at Trusthorpe in the County of Lincoln, of lawful parents, who were legally Settled there, with whom he resided as part of their family until he was about Ten Years old, when he went to Service and lived in various places as a Servant in Husbandry. That when he was about Seventeen Years of Age, he let himself in the Month of May to one William Stocks of the parish of Withering or Witheren in the said County of Lincoln for one Year from old May Day, and duly Entered upon and performed that Years Service and received his full Years Wages, but the amount he cannot now recollect. That [when he was] about 19 years old he Let himself at old Michaelmas to one William Bains Master of a Fishing Vessel belonging to the Port of Hull in Yorkshire for one Year, to serve him at Sea, and rec.^d 5^s as hire and was to have Five Pounds Wages for the Year, which Years Service he duly performed on Board of Ship and received his full wages but to the best of his knowledge and belief he never Lodged on Shore, but on Board during the whole year. After the expiration of that year he and William Bains purchased another Vessel, with which They carried on the Fishing Trade together as partners, and Traded from the Port of

Blakeney in Norfolk, to various other places, and he about Christmas Time in the Year 1791 was lawfully Married by Banns at the Church of Blakeney to Sarah his present wife before

Sarah Murrell of that parish Spinster, and took a cottage there of Michael Jackson of the Annual Rent of 50^s which he occupied for about four years But does not remember being Rated or paying any Rates or Taxes for the same. he then Quitted Jacksons Premises and took another Cottage of the Extors of the late Henry Chaplin, at the Yearly Rent of 2 Guineas, which he Occupied about 4 years but he cannot recollect whether when he first Entered on those premises he was Rated or paid any Rates or Taxes for the same, but he well remembers that during the latter part of the Time he paid the poors Rates both to M^r John Taylor and M^r Robert Brereton Overseers, and particularly that to the latter he paid two Quarters Rates or two Rates at one Time, and on Account of the Sum being large he requested a receipt which M^r Brereton gave him and as much as he can recollect the Sum paid was more than 19^s., but he cannot now find the receipt, and that from that Time to the present he has been regularly Rated for the premises which he has Occupied in Blakeney, But has never Rented or Occupied Premises of the Annual Value of Ten Pounds never Executed any Annual Office or Charge in the said Parish, neither has he done any Act whatsoever to his knowledge or belief, whereby to gain himself a Settlement, and that he has no Estate of his own or in Right of his said Wife, by whom he has the following Children Born in Wedlock Viz^t William Aged 14 Years, John Aged 13 Years, [Sarah Aged 12 crossed out] Francis Aged 9 Years, Mary Aged 7 Years, Zacheus Aged 4 Years, Margaret Aged 2 and an half Years & Deborah about 7 Months, but neither he nor his said family or any of them are now or ever have been Chargeable to the said parish of Blakeney- And, this Examinant further saith that the receipt now produced and given by him to M^r Burcham the Guardian of the poor of Blakeney aforesaid, is the same which he took of M^r Brereton for the Rates as before mentioned which he this Examinant has just now found.

[Signed by his own hand] *John Baines*

Taken and Sworn before us [signed] *J. W. Thomlinson* *R J Gough*

John Baines certainly appears to have satisfied the examiners as he continued to live in Blakeney. So this Lincolnshire lad who had been born in Trusthorpe,⁹ a very small coastal village, left home at ten years of age to make his way in the world by first working on the land for nine years, then returned to the sea aboard a boat sailing between the City of Hull and the north coast of Norfolk. It further shows the way agricultural labourers were hired annually and consequently how many were forced to move around the countryside from farm to farm, but John Baines broke this cycle and learnt the craft of fishing which he obviously preferred and was to pursue for the rest of his life.

Immediately the question arises: who was William Bains, master of the fishing vessel? Was he a relative and if so was his family resident in a neighbouring parish? Is he the William Baines who captained the *Blakeney Packet*, a vessel of 57.14 tons burthen owned by R. J. and R. Brereton, that was taken over by the new master James May in 1826?¹⁰

Then there is another intriguing aspect as the other surviving Settlement Examination from Blakeney, again from 1806, concerns William Browne who was the brother-in-law of John Baines, both men having married Murrell sisters. His examination shows that he was born the 'base son' of Amy Browne of Wells, that he went to sea at ten years of age, was impressed on board a Man of War, the *Royal Sovereign*, for three years, discharged and came ashore to serve with Peter Silence in Blakeney on board his ship, the *Walpole*, as a seaman. This vessel took corn to London during the winter months and generally brought coal from Newcastle to



Figure 3

60 High Street

**Flint and brick
cottage fronting
the road with
No. 58 behind**

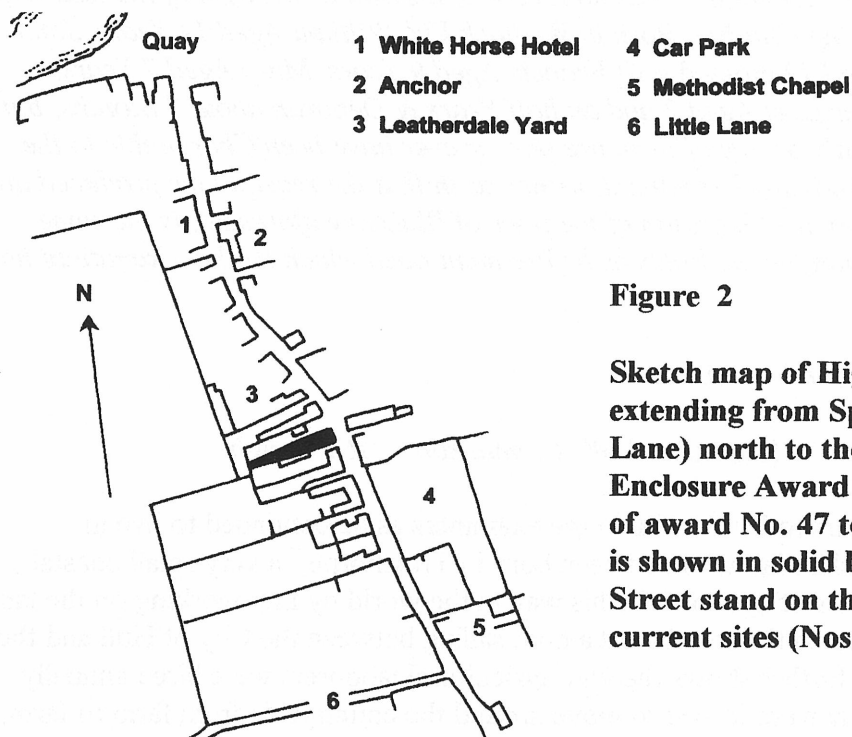


Figure 2

**Sketch map of High Street, Blakeney
extending from Spur Way (now Little
Lane) north to the Quay, based on the
Enclosure Award map, 1824. The position
of award No. 47 to John and Sarah Baines
is shown in solid black; today 58 and 60 High
Street stand on this spot. The location of
current sites (Nos 1-6) are given for reference.**



Figure 4

58 High Street

(Behind No. 60)

Blakeney in the summer. About 1790 he married Elizabeth Murrell ‘.... by whom he has Two Daughters (namely) Mary turned of 13 Years of Age and Amy turned of 11 Years’.

If you consider that John Murrell, their father-in-law, died aged 78 within the year of their examination, and possibly of an illness that was already apparent when both men were examined, then you have to speculate whether the Overseers observed the looming prospect of two men with their families becoming a chargeable burden on the Poor Relief. Or was it possible that both men took the initiative themselves and requested to be examined so that their future position and that of their families could be secured in Blakeney and settlement certificates issued?

Parliamentary Inclosure Awards

In the years following the examination John Baines can be found making contributions to rates relating to the poor and the highways and becoming part of the local community.

Furthermore, from the picture that emerges it would appear that he employed all his sons on his small fishing boat called the *Success*,¹¹ teaching them the trade before they moved on to boats of their own or away to crew for others. Certainly the spread of ages would have enabled this to happen for the birth of his sons spanned some 22 years from 1792 with the arrival of William through until 1814 when Edward, the youngest, was born.

He continued to prosper for in 1820 he claimed property¹² at the time of Inclosure as follows:

John Banes and Sarah his wife Claim two freehold cottages, with the outhouses, yards and gardens to the same belonging with the appurtenances, in the several occupations of the said John Bane and Mary Murrell, widow. And they claim the same rights of common, and other rights, as are claimed by William Pond.

The Parliamentary Inclosure Award of 1824 for Glandford, Wiveton and Blakeney¹³ shows that in due course he was allotted first, No. 47, a freehold property of 8 perches where a ‘messuage and other buildings’ stood, which relates to the premises described above, and then secondly No. 119, 13 perches of freehold land ‘from Morston’ which relates to land on the south side of South Foreland Road and is in lieu of the loss of his common rights.

He was the only member of the Baines family to claim and receive an award at the time of Inclosure and his two freehold cottages at allotment No. 47 (Fig. 2) where he was living with his widowed mother-in-law, Mary Murrell, as a neighbour can be identified today as Nos 58 and 60 on the west side of the High Street (Figs 3 and 4). His two eldest sons William and John are both married by this time and they are mentioned as tenants of Robert John Brereton and Augustine Spaul, respectively. This puts William in a property at Greencroft and John in one of the cottages that are now part of the Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing Society's row of cottages covering numbers 83 to 89, just across the High Street from his parents.

Sons and Daughters.

John and Sarah had a family of six sons and six daughters which can be followed from the start of the nineteenth century through the Parish Registers (see Table 1 for male descendants).

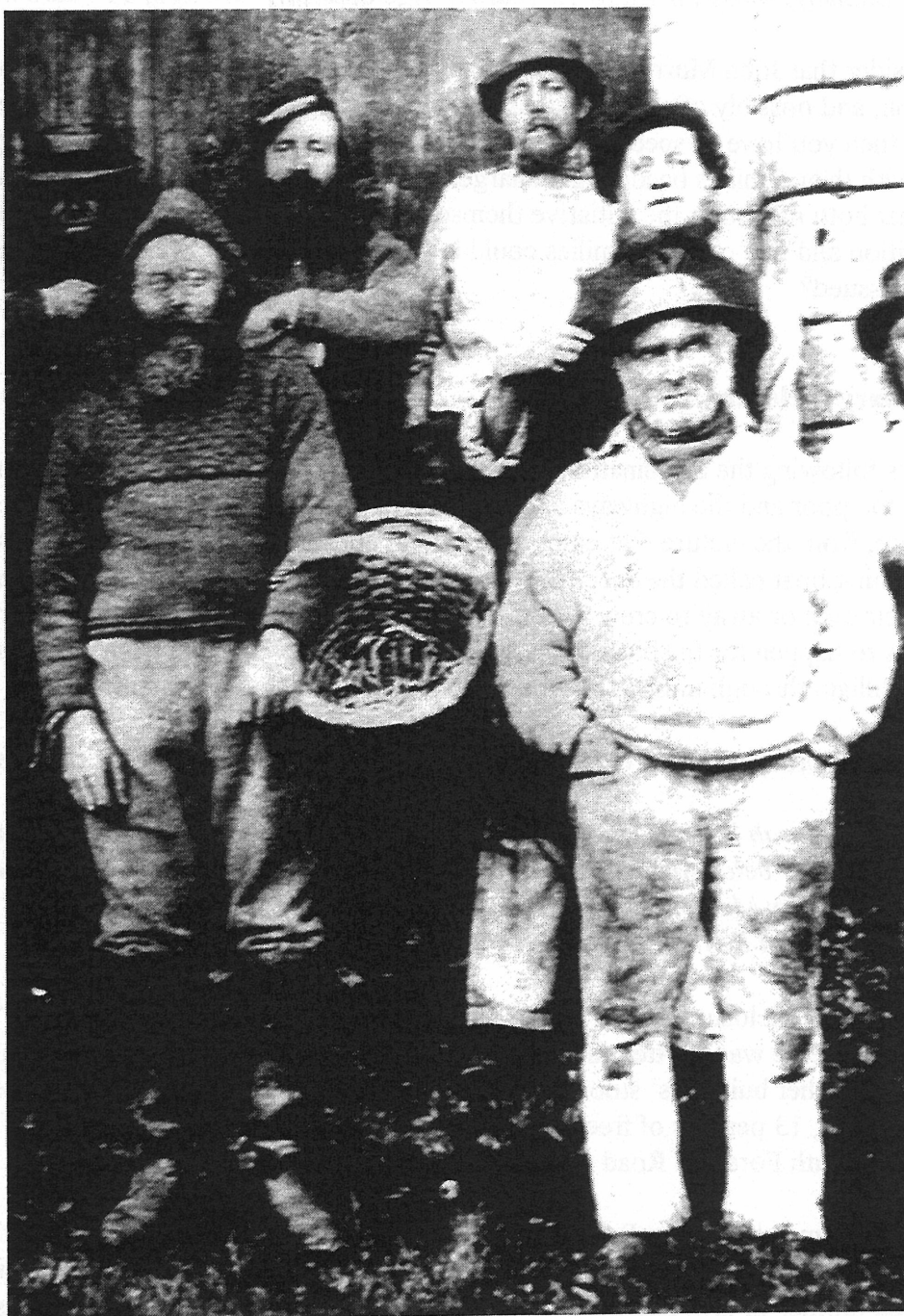


Figure 5

Photograph taken in front of the Guildhall c.1880 (detail)

Edward Baines is on the left holding a basket and wearing leather boots with Murrell Baines, probably his father, on the right with hands in pockets

TABLE 1 MALE DESCENDANTS OF JOHN BAINES IN THE 19th CENTURY

Arranged in family groups in three columns: sons, grandsons and great grandsons. The years of birth or baptism and death are given as well as occupations and place of residence in either 1881 or 1891^(25, 26)

Sons	Grand- Sons	Great Grandsons	Occupation (when known)	Census 1891 (in brackets 1881)
William (1792 - 1862)	John (1812 -)	Edward Murrell Stone (1846 -)	Fisherman	Deceased
		Thomas John (1850 -)	Mariner	(South Shields)
		John William (1853 -)		(South Shields)
	Francis Murrell (1822 -)	Richard Davison (1842)	Sailor	No record
				(South Shields)
				(Upwell)
John (1793 - 1848)			Fisherman / Master Mar.	Deceased
Francis Murrell (1796 - 1816)				Deceased
Zaccheus (1802 -)			Fisherman / Master Mar.	(South Shields)
	Zaccheus Murrell (1823 -)			
	John Barber (1829 -)			
	William Brown (1834 -)		Mariner	(Glamorgan)
Murrell Brown (1809 - 1900)			Fisherman	Blakeney
	John (1829 - 1866)		Mariner	Deceased
	Edward Murrell (1835 -)		Fisherman	Blakeney
	John Murrell (1855 -)		Mariner	
	Murrell (1857 -)			
	James William (1860 -)			
	Murrell Beavis (1835 -)		Mariner	No record
	James (1837 - 1850)			
	Francis (1837 -)			
	Zaccheus (1839 -)			No record
	William (1842 - 1901)		Fisherman	Blakeney
	William Edward Alfred (1878 - 1963)		Scholar	Blakeney
	Francis (1843 - 1843)			
	Frederick Warnes (1848 -)		Carpenter	(Letheringsett)
	Frederick W. (1876 -)			(Letheringsett)
	Walter R. (1879 -)			(Letheringsett)
	James Beavis (1851 - 1884)		Carpenter	Deceased
	Thomas (1873 -)		Ag. Lab.	Blakeney
	John (1875 -)		Shop Assist.	Blakeney
	Arthur (= Tom) (1889 -)		Coal Miner	Blakeney
Edward Baley (1814 - 1869)			Pilot / Master Mariner	Deceased
	Edward Murrell (1835 - 1923)		Fisherman / Master Mar.	Blakeney
	Edward Benjamin Booty (1873 - 1884)			Deceased
	Benjamin Booty (1878 -)		Scholar	Blakeney
	Robert Lincoln (1880 - 1885)			Deceased
	William Edward (1882 -)		Scholar	Blakeney

Two of John and Sarah's daughters, Sarah and Deborah, died while still infants and were recorded in 1885⁽²⁰⁾ as sharing a headstone in Blakeney Churchyard. However this headstone, which was the earliest for any member of the Baines family, has not been located since 1976.⁽²¹⁾ The three surviving daughters all married. The eldest, Mary Murrell, married William Hooke, a sailor, and they were possibly the parents of William Henry Hooke, coxswain of the first Blakeney RNLI Lifeboat. Then Peggy, probably the Margaret referred to in the Settlement Examination, married John Jary, a seaman, whilst Sarah the youngest daughter married Jacob Jeary, a local fisherman and son of a harbour pilot. Their daughter Deborah Sarah married Richard Holliday, also a fisherman who was to lose his life by drowning when the *Hunstman* had an incident with the *Phoenix* and the smack was lost with all hands.²² Sarah and Jacob Jeary's grandson, Jacob Holliday, the much beloved village character, bore an incredible resemblance to the grandfather after whom he was named.

However, it was the two youngest sons, Murrell Brown and Edward Baley, who continued the history of the Baines family in Blakeney, for the majority of their children and grandchildren remained in the Parish throughout the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth (Fig. 5). They are the only Baines that are still remembered in Blakeney carrying on the fishing tradition and the name, with their grandsons, 'Bugle' Baines and 'Tippenny' Baines respectively, being the last of the line²³ (Fig. 6).



Figure 6

6 Westgate Street, the home of W. E. A. 'Bugle' Baines
The name 'Bugles' appears on the door frame

The Registers frequently show the occupations of a groom at the time of marriage, together with those of both fathers, and again when the children were baptised. This information is supplemented by the detailed records found in the Censuses every ten years from 1841 to the end of the Century and together these sources highlight the close-knit seafaring community that the Baines children married into.

The eldest surviving sons, William, John and Zaccheus, were born in 1792, 1793 and 1802 respectively; all married and appear to have been fishermen. Both William and John were buried in Blakeney churchyard, where the headstone for the latter stands not far from those of his father and his youngest brother, Edward Baley Baines.¹⁴ However, nothing should be inferred from this proximity as many of these headstones were moved from the south east of the churchyard and relocated to their present site in 1992.¹⁵ The monumental inscriptions for all three list them as Master Mariners.

William's daughter Lydia married William Dew, a Blakeney mariner, and remained in the village, while her two brothers John and Francis Murrell moved away. John left sometime after his marriage to Lydia Sadler of Cley only to be found living in Wells in 1851⁽¹⁶⁾ with his second wife Harriet; the children of this second marriage were baptised in Stiffkey. Later still, in 1881, John and his extended family were living in South Shields and Westoe, County Durham; today Westoe is a suburb of South Shields, but in 1881 the two were recorded separately at the time of the Census.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Francis Murrell, the youngest son of William, married in Stiffkey where his children were also baptised.¹⁸

Zaccheus also married twice and by 1851 was living in Cley with his second wife, Pleasance Barber of Holt, and their children. Then in 1881 he was with Pleasance, in Westoe, County Durham, while their son, William Brown Baines, appears at the head of a list of seamen on board *SS Holmrook*, which was berthed at Briton Ferry in Glamorgan. Also on the crew list was William Edward Baines, aged 18, born in South Shields. Could he be family?

By 1881 the port of Blakeney was in terminal decline and the migration of people to cities from the countryside and the coast was a common pattern that had been continuing throughout the Industrial Revolution. So the fact that some of the Baines family migrated north to Westoe on the southern bank of the River Tyne is not surprising given the opportunities provided by the boats moving between Blakeney and Newcastle transporting coal during the summer and stockpiling it for the winter. Indeed, there is evidence of a continual movement of people sailing back and forth either on family boats or Packets, probably visiting family and taking the opportunity to look for work in the cluster of harbours around the mouth of the River Tyne. Not surprising that some married northern girls and settled there permanently, while others brought brides back to Blakeney. Then these young brides moved back and forth to have their babies at home with their mothers and so the cycle of movement was perpetuated.

It is interesting to speculate on how long this movement of people had occurred given the long history of the coal trade with northern ports, certainly it was extensive by the sixteenth century and was probably operating much earlier.¹⁹ It was not confined to Blakeney for by 1881 there were in excess of 9,000 Norfolk-born people living in County Durham with a concentration of 1,069 living in the comparatively small area of Westoe, with some 101 of the latter being born in Blakeney. So it is extremely likely that a high proportion of those living in the streets close to the River Tyne were either related or old friends from Norfolk.

Murrell was the Master of the *Charlotte* of Cley in 1833, a vessel of 20.44 tons built at Wells in 1807, then just a few years later, in 1840, he appears as the owner of the *Eagle*, a 13+ ton fishing boat.²⁴ For the rest of his working life he is described as a fisherman and from his two marriages he has a family of ten sons and two daughters. Of all John Baines's sons, it is Murrell who lives through the century to die in 1900. His younger brother, Edward Baines, had a shorter seafaring life being described variously as a Pilot and finally Master Mariner on his headstone. The inscription informs further that:

EDWARD B. BAINES

Who was drowned at sea Oct 20th 1869

(Afterwards Buried Here)

Aged 54 Years

Like so many other tragedies recorded by inscriptions in the churchyard, it would seem that some time elapsed before his body was recovered and buried. Edward and his wife Phoebe Mason had a single son who was baptised Edward Murrell on the 22nd February 1835. On the very same day and in the same church, Murrell, his older brother, baptised his second son with the same set of Christian names, every family historian's nightmare!

Finally there is the puzzle of Capt. Baines, master of the *Hebe* in 1845. This vessel was an ex-French prize ship, taken during the Napoleonic War and owned by the Mann family of Cley. Could this be Edward or was it his older brother Zaccheus who was still living in Cley at this time before he migrated north to Westoe?

Untold in this account is John Baines's abiding faith in Methodism for he registered his home as a meeting place for worship and continued to do so even after the Chapel was built in the High Street in 1812.⁽²⁷⁾ An explanation could be that he belonged to another branch of Methodism, possibly Primitive, and only later did his family join the Chapel where their baptisms are recorded well into the twentieth century.

Conclusion

The arrival of John Baines in Blakeney heralded a change in his fortunes for he became a minor entrepreneur, settling in the village, continuing his trade as a fisherman and then became the owner of property and boats, with possibly a fortunate marriage having played some part in this development. It was a long way from working as a 'Servant in Husbandry', probably as one of those ubiquitous agricultural labourers of eighteenth-century rural England.

Although he does not appear to have made a major impact on the village, he was able to provide for his large family of sons and daughters, eight of whom survived into adult life, with the majority staying in the village and becoming part of a close-knit community, while one son migrated north. Virtually all his male descendants maintained a close association with the sea and fishing; indeed it was not broken until Murrell's two youngest sons became carpenters as the nineteenth century drew to a close. Although the family name has now disappeared, having survived for five generations, there are nonetheless descendants of John Baines, albeit through the female lines, that still live in the area today.

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