

THE *WILLIAM & THOMAS*: TRADING ACCOUNTS (1726 – 1733)

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In 1995 there came to light a new source of information about the trading activities of Blakeney Haven in the eighteenth century. The source is a notebook containing the accounts of 31 voyages made between 1726 and 1733 and also some other accounts, mostly relating to the sale of coal. The writing is that of William Jennis of Weybourne. This article shows how the book came to be in the author's possession and describes its contents, but does not attempt any systematic analysis of the material.

Introduction

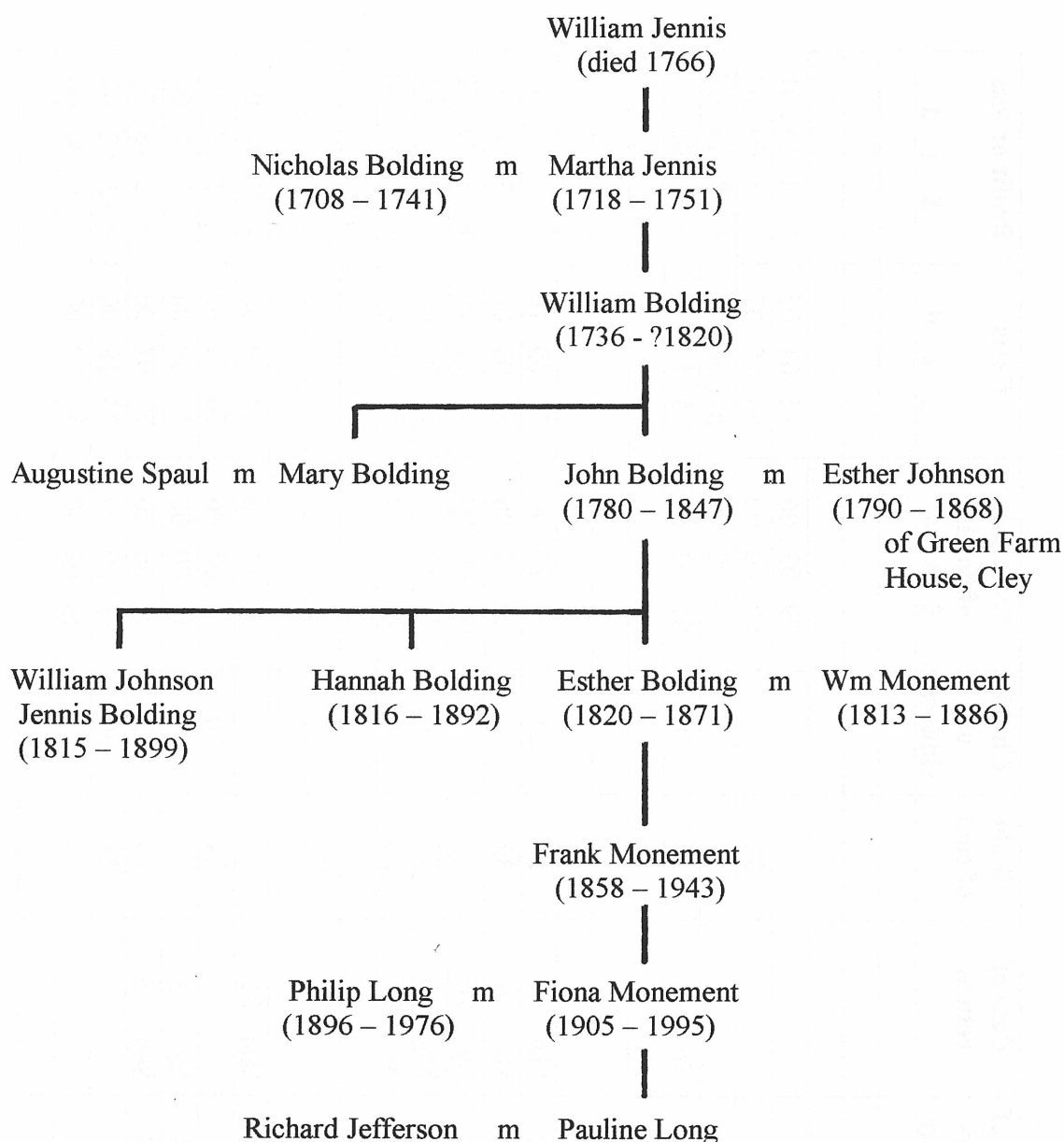
In April 1995 Fiona Long died in her ninetieth year. In the bottom drawer of her bureau was found the manuscript notebook described in this article. The book had lain unnoticed for at least 50 years, and may not have been opened for over two hundred years – early eighteenth-century evidence waiting for its secrets to be revealed. The book was once the property of William Jennis of Weybourne, landowner and merchant, and the principal contents are the accounts of 31 voyages made in his own ship the *William & Thomas*, and details of coal sold to local customers. In appearance the volume is a small, coverless 'exercise' book with 55 pages used.

The following paragraphs explain the connection between William Jennis and the author and then describe briefly the contents of the notebook.

Provenance

What is the provenance of the book? Fiona Long, whose daughter is the author's wife, was herself the daughter of Frank Monement. The connection between Frank and the shipowner, William Jennis, is shown on the skeletal family tree.

Frank Monement inherited Green Farm House and its land at Cley on the death of his bachelor uncle, William Johnson Jennis Bolding (1815 – 1899) of Weybourne, but chose not to live there, instead building The Green (in 1900) further up the hill. Green Farm House had come into the Bolding family after W. J. J. Bolding's father had married Esther Johnson. W J J Bolding's great-grandfather Nicholas Bolding (1708 – 1741) had married Martha Jennis (1718 – 1751) the daughter of William Jennis. It is this William, who died in 1766, who is the author of most of the writing in the notebook. William was the last male member of the Jennis family of Weybourne and he left his Weybourne estate to his grandson William Bolding (1736 - ?1820). Eight generations and the manuscript book has survived – more than a little battered but with most of the writing very clear.



Shipping accounts

The main section of the book, and by far the most important, consists of the accounts for 31 voyages made between 1726 and 1733 by William Jennis's ship, the *William & Thomas*, registered at Blakeney but sailing mainly from Cley. Most of the voyages (26) were made in ballast to Newcastle to purchase coal for sale in north Norfolk. There were also two trips to Norway with 'freight', two to London with barley, and one to Holland with a cargo of wool.

As the photocopy of the fourth voyage to Newcastle shows, William Jennis had clear, neat writing with just enough idiosyncratic spelling to challenge the modern reader! The layout is essentially the same for all voyages so we can be grateful for his organisation and the consistency of his bookkeeping.

The costs of each voyage can be placed into three categories: provisions, other necessary trading charges, and ship maintenance costs. The accounts themselves do not recognise these categories but items are listed very roughly in the order in which they were incurred.

THE WILLIAM AND THOMAS : SUMMARY ACCOUNTS FOR 31 VOYAGES 1726-1733

Date of sailing	From	To	No. of days away	Date of return	Chald of coal	Chald of cinders	From sale of goods £ s d	Costs £ s d	Profit or loss £ s d
1726									
May 20	Cley	1 Newcastle					79 . 03 . 06	74 . 08 . 05	+ 4 . 15 . 01
July 5	Cley	2 Newcastle			32		62 . 00 . 00	60 . 15 . 07	+ 1 . 04 . 05
Aug 5	Cley	3 Newcastle			32		65 . 00 . 00	61 . 06 . 05	+ 3 . 13 . 07
Sep 23		4 Newcastle	45	Nov 7	24	30	87 . 02 . 00	75 . 19 . 09	+ 11 . 02 . 03
1727									
Feb 13	Cley	5 Newcastle	22	Mar 7	24	23	73 . 10 . 00	73 . 09 . 10	+ 02
Apr 12	Cley	6 Newcastle	24	May 6	32		59 . 17 . 00	63 . 03 . 02	- 3 . 06 . 02
Jun 12	Cley	NORWAY	44	Jly 26			45 . 00 . 00	39 . 12 . 10	+ 5 . 07 . 02
Aug 22	Cley	7 Newcastle	15	Sep 6	24	30	76 . 12 . 10	74 . 05 . 04	+ 2 . 07 . 06
Oct 14	Cley	8 Newcastle	42	Nov 25	20	40	76 . 06 . 00	74 . 16 . 00	+ 1 . 10 . 00
1728									
Mar 1	Cley	HOLLAND	30	Mar 31			35 . 14 . 00	44 . 19 . 06	- 9 . 05 . 06
Apr 16	Blakeney	9 Newcastle			24	30	72 . 06 . 06	70 . 04 . 00	+ 2 . 02 . 06
Jun 8	Blakeney	NORWAY	25	Jly 3			42 . 00 . 00	37 . 00 . 04	+ 4 . 19 . 08
Aug 3	Cley	10 Newcastle	33	Sep 5	24	32	80 . 06 . 00	77 . 07 . 06	+ 2 . 18 . 06
Oct 3	Cley	11 Newcastle			24	30	87 . 00 . 00	74 . 18 . 00	+ 12 . 02 . 00
Dec 28	Cley	LONDON					39 . 03 . 00	33 . 19 . 00	+ 5 . 04 . 00
1729									
Mar 1	London	12 Newcastle			24	34	84 . 02 . 00	81 . 06 . 03	+ 2 . 15 . 09
May 2	Cley	13 Newcastle	25	May 27	32		66 . 16 . 00	80 . 04 . 02	- 13 . 08 . 02

Date of sailing	From	To	No. of days away	Date of return	Chald of coal	Chald of cinders	From sale of goods £ s d	Costs £ s d	Profit or loss £ s d
Jun 7	Cley	14 Newcastle	12	Jun 19	32	06	76 . 00 . 00	67 . 08 . 08	+ 8 . 11 . 04
Jly 2	Cley	15 Newcastle	22	Jly 24	32		68 . 00 . 00	68 . 13 . 02	- 13 . 02
Jly 31	Cley	16 Newcastle			24	28.5	76 . 01 . 00	75 . 02 . 10	+ 18 . 02
Sep 2	Cley	17 Newcastle	24	Sep 26	32		62 . 14 . 00	66 . 05 . 11	- 3 . 11 . 11
Nov 1	Cley	18 Newcastle	18	Nov 19	20	40	83 . 03 . 09	93 . 12 . 04	- 10 . 08 . 07
1730									
Jan 10		LONDON					39 . 08 . 00	33 . 14 . 10	+ 5 . 13 . 02
Feb 24	London	19 Newcastle	36	Apr 1	26	25	75 . 14 . 06	73 . 12 . 02	+ 2 . 02 . 04
May 1	Cley	20 Newcastle			28	21	74 . 05 . 00	75 . 11 . 00	- 1 . 06 . 00
Jun 3	Cley	21 Newcastle	12	Jun 15	29	21	70 . 10 . 00	70 . 14 . 03	- 04 . 03
Jly 6	Cley	22 Newcastle	12	Jly 18	30	21	78 . 16 . 00	90 . 15 . 00	- 11 . 19 . 00
Aug 5	Cley	23 Newcastle	15	Aug 20	35		58 . 10 . 00	61 . 05 . 11	- 2 . 15 . 11
Sep 11	Cley	24 Newcastle	37	Oct 18	25	32	75 . 09 . 00	77 . 05 . 11	- 1 . 16 . 11
1731									
Feb 12	Cley	25 Newcastle	18	Mar 2	26	30	74 . 00 . 00	74 . 15 . 3 ½	- 15 . 3 ½
1733									
Mar 26	Cley	26 Newcastle	40	May 5	25	30	71 . 12 . 00	75 . 18 . 00	- 4 . 06 . 00

Note: Date of return is either as recorded or else the date of paying the pilot at Cley.

Chalders of coal and cinders are as loaded at Newcastle – the quantities declared at Cley are different (perhaps because of the different measures in use).

The victualling costs, both before and during each voyage, are all recorded item by item. Quantities are usually given as well, so that it is possible to ascertain unit costs for the bread, beef and beer that made up the bulk of the provisions. Salt, cheese and peas also feature but butter and flour are rarities.

Other regular charges include the cost of pilots into and out of Cley, Newcastle and other ports visited, and associated *tide works*. At Newcastle the ballast had to be removed, coal and cinders (coke) loaded and 'trimmed', then at Cley the cargo had to be unloaded and lightered up to the quay – and all these operations had to be paid for. There were also various dues to be paid: at the Townhouse and the Customs House in Newcastle, and again at the Customs House in Cley. And what an expense that was! On the fourth voyage the duty at Cley on the coal and cinders was £20 2s 6d, not much less than the cost of buying it in Newcastle and more than 20% of the total costs of the voyage. There were harbour dues and quay dues as well and, of course, wages and allowances for the crew.

The ship's complement was six – the master, four men and a boy. On only one voyage, the ninth to Newcastle, were the names of the crew listed (although the text is not easily legible at this point). Robert Jennis was paid £1 15s, W. Harseen (?Harrison), John Codelen and Jeffery Kendrey were paid £1 10s each, and a boy 15s. William Jennis, as master, paid himself £5, as he did on every Newcastle voyage. Everyone was paid more on the two trips to Norway: on the second, one crew member was listed as 'mate' and was paid £4 10s, with the other men at £2 10s each and William Jennis taking £10.

Maintaining the ship was an expensive business and many different items are recorded: sails, rigging, anchor and pumps had to be repaired or replaced, the hull caulked and new ironwork made – and tradesmen employed to do the work. Oakum, grease, pitch and paint were needed, as well as new rope, barrels, buckets and shovels, and a surprising quantity of nails.

After all these expenses: profit or loss? It is clear that the period from mid 1726 to mid 1729 was profitable, with money being made on 14 of the 16 voyages. The net profit was £47 10s 11d, representing an income of 4.7% on his recorded outlay of just over £1000. Thereafter, to March 1731, 11 of the 15 trips made a loss and the net deficit was £34 4s 2½d, a loss of 3.1% on virtually the same outlay. So much effort to do little better than break even.

The four biggest loss-making voyages all included large, unforeseen expenses: £11 14s for a new mainsail, £7 16s for a new foresail, and £16 16s 8d for a new *halfe cabel*, all on Newcastle voyages, and £5 8s 8d for a new maintopsail in Rotterdam. Other expenses on the Holland voyage led William Jennis to summarise clearly on the bottom line: *The ship is in deate to me £9 5s 6d!*

Early in 1731, after six successive loss-making voyages William Jennis presumably became very disillusioned. The ship was laid up for a spell (or perhaps hired out?) until March 1733 when one further voyage also lost money. This must have been the final straw. William was no longer a young man, and anyway he had considerable interests in Weybourne and elsewhere.

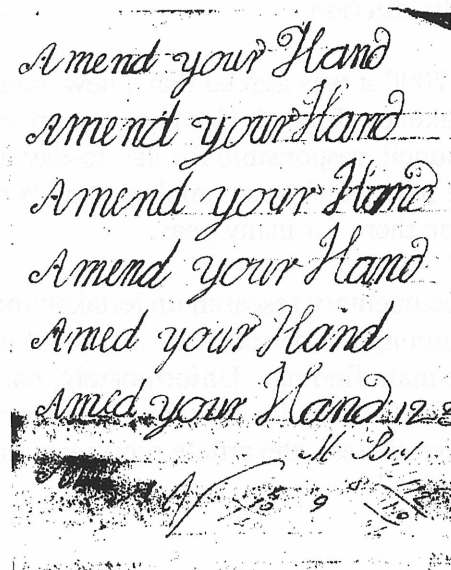
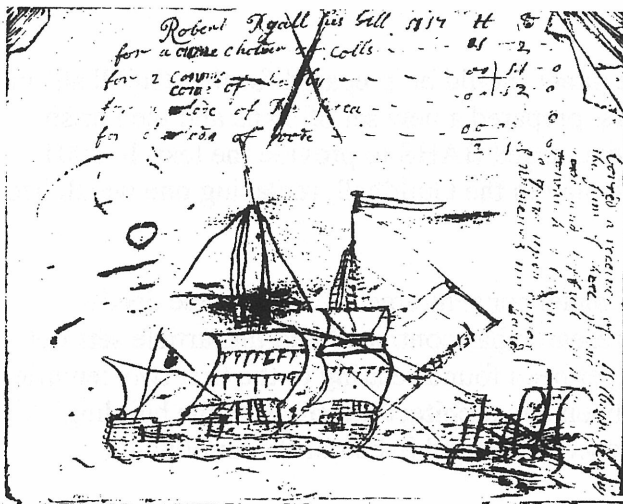
Yet this was not the end of ship owning by the family. In the final years of the eighteenth century William Bolding, the grandson of William Jennis, owned a ship with his son-in-law Augustine Spaul (a Blakeney resident) as master and his young son John Bolding as one of

the crew. Their exploits are the subject of a chapter in Jonathan Hooton's book *The Glaven Ports*. Later still, in 1846, William Johnson Jennis Bolding, in partnership with his brother-in-law William Monement (a cork merchant from King's Lynn), purchased the *Enterprise of Cley* and *Blakeney*. This ship's account book, for 1846-1854, resides in the Bowden-Smith papers in the Norfolk Record Office.

[illegible]

Other contents

One last task remains: to identify the other contents of the manuscript book. It is an eclectic list. ‘Received of Samuel Jennis’ seems to be the earliest entry on a rather confusing page, but the most interesting section is 25 pages of accounts by William Jennis for the period 1726-1734, often relating to the sale of coal in north Norfolk. There is a letter from William Jennis to his (unnamed) brother, written in 1719, and a slightly saucy love poem: *blooming charms* and *forbidden joys* as well as warm and mutual love. There is certainly a later hand at work in the book, often using up empty or half pages. It must be William Bolding, the grandson, whose name is written several times. There is handwriting practice, *amend your hand* becoming incorrect with practice! And there is one finished and several unfinished drawings of ships under sail, and various doodles.



Comment

Now that this document has come to light it is appropriate that the Blakeney Area Historical Society should have access to the source material. What is the significance of the accounts? Comparison with the official customs records, for instance, might make an interesting study! It should be noted, however, that the notebook is not in good condition and can be handled only infrequently. Arrangements are being made for the book to be photographed so that the content can be made available in the form of a CD-ROM and paper copy.

Richard Jefferson, former cricketer and teacher, is an avid collector of things historical, especially those relating to the Glaven Valley.