



BAHS Newsletter

Number 17

August 2004



Barringer's front...

Barringer's Back

The next UEA Extra Mural course will be led by our old friend Dr Chris Barringer. It was a similar series of lectures by Chris Barringer, then under the auspices of Cambridge University, which led to the formation of the Blakeney History Group. The BHG later grew into the present Blakeney Area Historical Society – and a more than tenfold increase in membership – so welcome back! The details of the course are given below:

UEA Autumn Course

Introduction to Local History and its Sources

Dr Chris Barringer

Ever wanted to know more about an area, the people who lived there and how they operated, the buildings and their history? This is your opportunity to explore key themes and look at relevant sources, sometimes drawing on records held within the History Centre for local colour.

Start Date: 29 September
Day/Time: Wednesdays 10am - 12noon
Venue: Scout Hut, Blakeney Village Hall complex, Langham Road
Duration: 8 weeks, plus an outing
Cost: £75
Enrolment and Enquiries: 01263 741063



Anne Maw is waiting for you...to cough up your subscription renewal. Don't lose your membership! (photo John Cucksey)

Membership Renewal Slip

Name:

Address:

£10 individual £14 family
(delete as appropriate)

Remittances should be sent to the Treasurer
Anne Maw, 2, Wiveton Road, Blakeney, NR25 7NJ

A Winner!

Congratulations to Monica White who has won a Phillimore Award for published pieces of work by an amateur historian from the British Association for Local History. This was for her article in last year's Glaven Historian No.6 entitled "Reminiscences of the Glaven Valley: Care of the Dying and the Dead in the first 50 years of the 20th Century". It made very interesting reading, not at all gloomy, because it showed how the community and expectations have changed.

Anne Maw

Rabbits Galore!

The Warrens of Breckland

Report on a BAHS lecture by Anne Mason

(24 ii 2004)

Anne Mason gave a most interesting brief history of rabbits in this country. They were introduced here by the Normans to supply fresh winter meat for the rich and for monasteries. As they were native to the Mediterranean area, they required cosseting, so warreners were employed to look after and feed the animals (the word 'rabbit' was used only for the young – the adult was called a 'coney'). Each warrener had his warrener's lodge, the best known survivor being that at Thetford.

The first warren in Norfolk was at Brandon, established c1251, and they ranged in extent from 50 to over 1,000 acres. Many of them were owned by monasteries, typically large land-owners, but these were sold off at the Dissolution. By that time most manors had their own, small warren, as well as a dovecot, as a status symbol. Much useful information about warrens can be found in Manor Court rolls.

The animals were caught either by netting the holes before sending down a ferret, or by driving into long nets. Peak 'output' was in the 19th century when train loads of coney were sent to London: 28,800 were culled annually at Thetford alone. There were fur factories at Brandon and Thetford using the output of local warrens.

Rabbits are territorial animals so rarely strayed from their warrens despite the minimal security. This changed in the 20th century when many small estates went bankrupt and the warrens decayed. By that time rabbits had lost their value and had become food for the poor. They had become a major agricultural pest until disease greatly reduced their numbers in the 1950s.

Anne Maw

6,000 Years on Blakeney Eye

Report on a BAHS lecture by Chris Birks.

(30 iii 2004)

The threat to Blakeney Eye from the advancing sea, when or if a new channel is cut for the Glaven, led to the Site Evaluation Survey carried out by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology in February and March 2003. This has in turn led to more extensive digs on the Eye in January and February of this year, and it is hoped, on the "chapel" site in a few months.

Chris Birks introduced himself and his experience in archaeology in this country and abroad and explained the workings of the County Archaeology Unit before describing and illustrating the work of the first Site Evaluation Survey for which he was the site manager (see John Wright's preliminary note in *Glaven Historian* 6).

Fiftyseven trenches 50 metres long were dug in the 60 hectare (148 acre) site. These were taken out by machine until finds or other signs of holes

or pits appeared and then hand dug. Enough evidence of neolithic agriculture and possibly of occupation then and/or in medieval times was found to justify the more thorough digs taking place this year. More recent finds included a gin-trap and small-arms ammunition, barbed-wire and signs of ploughing from the second world war.

As it is the likely recapture of the Eye by the sea that has led to the investigation, it was apt that the slides showed how the site seems to have been flooded more than once in the past.

The two trial trenches at the 'chapel' had revealed that some of the walls had well-built flint cobble footings and that part of the building had a fine cobbled floor but so far little evidence of habitation and even less of ecclesiastical activity had come to light.

Keeping the best till last and apologising that an information clamp-down had prevented any mention of it when BAHS members visited the site in February 2003, the speaker then stunned us with slides of a beautiful 40mm diameter gold bracheate of sixth century Scandinavian origin which had been found. Made of thin gold sheet with an embossed or punched design incorporating a stylised animal image this is a rare find in Britain and very rare outside Kent, and is fully illustrated in issue No.7 of the *Glaven Historian*, out now.

Frank Hawes

Ancestral Voices

Can you picture Blakeney School in the Victorian era? Can you hear the voices? Were any of the children there responsible for YOU? If you have any genealogical or other questions about the youth of Blakeney in the 50 years or so leading up to the First World War then go to the History Centre and ask for the Blakeney School Admissions Register for 1864 to 1912.

To make it easy for you all the entries (for over 1,500 pupils) have been indexed by name. Except for the record of educational attainment all information in the Register has been included in the Index: name, parent's name, date of birth, parish of residence, previous school, admission date, leaving date and (sometimes) the reason for leaving. One word of warning, though, don't believe everything you read! There are some inconsistencies between entries: children with two fathers, for instance, or some apparently leaving the school before being admitted. The records show plenty of movement into and out of the village – and a few deaths as well.

John Wright

Our thanks to John Wright for undertaking the truly massive task of indexing this material.

The Port of King's Lynn and North Norfolk Harbours

Report on a BAHS lecture by Dr Paul Richards (27 iv 2004)

Because of prospective building work, the April meeting of the Society had to be moved at short notice to Cley Village Hall – and it was perhaps just as well since the Blakeney Methodist Church could not easily have accommodated the numbers who turned up to hear Dr Paul Richards. His topic was 'The Port of Lynn and the North Norfolk Harbours 1500-1900.'

Dr Richards outlined the history from the grant of a charter to Lynn by King John, through its importance as a centre of trade with the Hanseatic League and, later, as a port trading with other parts of continental Europe. He then turned to its role as a port for the coastal trade – importing coals from Newcastle for distribution to Lynn's hinterland and exporting corn to London, as well as on the return voyages to Newcastle. Only this ability to transport food (and fuel) by water enabled the rapid growth of London and other cities to take place in the 17th and 18th centuries. The importance of waterborne freight and its profitability were badly affected by the coming of the railways in the 19th century. It then became easier and cheaper to move coal directly from the north east to London and other cities by rail. With the decline in coastal trade came diminishing importance for Lynn as a distribution centre for communities in its large hinterland, served so well in the past by the network of waterways. Finally, Dr Richards outlined the 20th century rise in the river and coastal leisure activities which have largely replaced commerce for most of the North Norfolk harbours – but Lynn is still an active port.

The lecture was illustrated by a comprehensive collection of slides and by fascinating tidbits of information. In the late 13th century King Edward I wished England to join – rather than just trade with – the Hanseatic League. His application to join was rejected – shades of General de Gaulle! German merchants had their own houses in 14th century Lynn and merchants in Lübeck trading with East Anglian and other English ports had their quarters in Engelstrasse. Lynn has one of the only two surviving Hanseatic warehouses in Britain – the other is in Shetland.

The volume of the coaling trade was astonishing. In 1608 more than 1,000 ships brought coal into Lynn and thence it was taken by waterways as far as Cambridge. In the 18th century more coal was imported at Lynn than in any other port except London. After the railways took over the transport of coal directly to the major cities, all was not completely lost since Lynn became involved in the coal trade in the reverse direction. Coal came by rail to Lynn from the Midlands collieries for export to continental Europe.

A less happy illustration of the role in trade played by harbours in North Norfolk was the

import of French furniture intended for the newly built Wolterton Hall in the 18th century. The ship arrived safely at Cley but then caught fire and the cargo was totally destroyed.

In conclusion, Dr Richards reverted to the Hanseatic League and the importance of its trade with Boston, Lynn and the North Norfolk ports. To emphasise these links a replica of a Hanseatic trading vessel will visit Kings Lynn on 8 August this year. Dr Richards' audience on 27 April had its collective appetite well and truly whetted for such an event.

Derek Schofield

St Mary's, Houghton-on-the-Hill

BAHS visit on 11 v 2004

The church of St Mary at Houghton-on-the-Hill is remarkable for its site, its decoration and not least for its recent history.

Houghton-on-the-Hill lay between the villages of North and South Pickenham. Its site above the valley of the River Whissey has provided finds from Roman, bronze and stone age occupations and the Peddars Way runs close by, but by the 18th century the village had gone. The Church was abandoned in 1945 but not de-consecrated and the last two cottages were demolished in the early 1990s to "square-up the adjacent field"! There are said to be visible signs of the former village in the fields around the church but not when the oil-seed rape is in bloom. By 1992 the church itself was almost hidden by ivy and was scheduled to be demolished.

We were shown round by Bob Davy who almost single handedly rescued it from oblivion after his wife penetrated the ivy cladding on a WI outing. What first drew him to its defence was not its historic importance but the clear evidence that it was in use for pagan rituals. His tales of confrontation with the perpetrators and assistance from the local TA volunteers enlivened our afternoon as did his description of the two ghostly Carmelite friars who appear from time to time.

But Mr Davy and his assistant were equally enthusiastic about the building itself which has turned out to have a nave built at the end of the 8th century and subsequently altered in the 12th and 14th. The present tower was built in the 14th century and the chancel in the 18th, but through all these periods St Mary's greatest treasure remained hidden under layers of medieval plaster. The original 8th century paintings that are now being revealed and studied are so important that Bob Davy now cares for his church with a committee of 38 experts looking over his shoulder. The image of the Trinity on the east wall is not only unique in Britain but is the earliest known example in Europe and hence in the world.

If you were one of those who missed this visit all is not lost. Mr Davy gives guided tours (allow a good two hours) by prior appointment. Ring him on 01760 440470.

Frank Hawes

Autumn/Winter Programme 2004-5

There will be a modest charge of £1 for members attending the meetings whilst all non-members, that is guests and visitors alike, will be charged £2. There will be no additional charge for Refreshments. Remember to renew your subscriptions (due 1 July for the year 2004-5) in order to have a vote at the AGM and to enjoy reduced entry rates to meetings.

Lectures

All meetings (unless otherwise stated) are held on the last Tuesday of the month in the Methodist Chapel, High Street, Blakeney, and start at 7.30pm.

- Saturday
July 24 **Annual Summer Lecture:
Historically Speaking**
Keith Skipper
Doan yew miss'un, bor.
- Blakeney Village Hall
(£4 admission for all to this event)
- Sept 14 **Annual General Meeting**
followed by lecture
- The Archive Centre**
Dr John Alban
- October 26 **An Embarrassment of Finds**
Dr Andrew Rogerson
- November 30 **Wrecks and Rescues**
Charles Lewis
- January 25 **Members Night**
Assorted Delights

Details of the meetings to be held on 22 February, 29 March, and 26 April will be given in the next Newsletter.

Fieldwork

Moats and Earthworks

A practical exercise in observation and interpretation led by Eric Hotblack.

Saturday morning, 5 February 2005
Cost £3. Limited spaces so booking essential.

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History Centre News

The past year has seen the map collection housed in a new cabinet and A3 folders, and the acquisition of a copy of the Blakeney School Admission Register that starts in 1864 together with an easy to follow Index of all the pupils. Postal and local enquiries have largely centred on families and these include Loads, Beavis, Larkman, Elsy, Newland, Laurence, Spaul, Dix, Stirges, Boyce, Powditch, Jary, King, Eggleton, Bishop and Mallett, to name just some.

Open Days

Thursdays, 5 and 26 August, 10am - 4.30pm

Not surprising then to find that the theme this year will be People. We ask you to bring and share with us memories and photographs of people who lived in the Glaven villages, families, school photographs, classes, teams, groups, special events or personalities who visited the area etc. Help us put names to faces on our photographs, look at the growing collection of family trees and see when your great grandfather started school.

New Opening for Members

Starting this September, the History Centre will open on the first Monday evening of each month until May (inclusive), excluding Bank Holidays. The opening is strictly for Members and will run from 7pm - 9pm. Booking of film/fiche readers or computer would still be advisable (01263 740388) and the usual charges will apply.

This is an opportunity for members to start their family history and have guidance in working through knotty problems as help will be on hand. Equally it is a chance to carry on with shipping research following the successful course led by Jonathan Hooton earlier in the year, or to explore sources for the UEA Local History Course, or simply to engage in private research.

Cockthorpe

Wednesday 23 February 2005, 10.30am

Advance news of an exciting project. Cockthorpe is a small parish that was once amalgamated with Blakeney and hence the records in the History Centre. It would make a manageable sized project as much could be accomplished within a very short period. Learn how to measure up the church and draw a plan with Frank Hawes, list the monumental inscriptions, and follow up the records in the History Centre. Remember the two Stuart Admirals from Cockthorpe. If you would like to know more come to the introductory meeting that will be held in the church.