



# BAHS Newsletter

Number 18

December 2004



## Who do they think they are?

**P**owditch family members from all over the world recently held their first family reunion when they gathered together in Morston for three days as guests of The Friends of Morston Church. Outings to various places of interest followed by luncheons and dinners allowed members to find out more about each other and their ancestors who had lived in these North Norfolk villages.

A service of Thanksgiving was led by the Bishop of Norwich, Rt. Revd Graeme James in All Saints, Morston when a memorial plaque was unveiled and dedicated, floral tributes laid and the family tree exhibited. Then on the last morning, members of the BAHS guided the family around Wiveton where Thomas Powditch of Outwell and Wiveton had lived sometime before 1519, making this the earliest known Powditch family on this part of the coast. To find out more, click on:

[www.powditch.plus.com](http://www.powditch.plus.com)

## An Embarrassment of Finds

*Report on a BAHS lecture by Dr Andrew Rogerson  
(26 x 04)*

Dr Rogerson started his talk with some background to the Museums Service and a tribute to the late Mr Rainbird Clarke, who started a card index of Norfolk archaeological finds and sites in the 1930s and built it up when he joined the Castle Museum after the war. Because of his pioneering work, and because successors like Dr Rogerson have built contacts with the metal-detecting fraternity, of which some archaeologists would not approve, and because it is largely an arable county, Norfolk has more records from more sites than any other part of the country.

Maps of various types of finds; palaeolithic hand axes, bronze age axeheads, Roman coins etc were shown and Dr Rogerson explained the reason for the title of his talk. In spite of, or even because of, this wealth of records several of the maps revealed more about the locations of 20th century searches than about sites of historic or prehistoric activity. In an attempt to make the records and maps more useful efforts are now being made to record sites where searches failed to produce finds. It was pointed out that the majority of interesting large objects had come to light through agricultural working rather than metal-detecting.

The slides showed the range of finds recorded: a group of unused bronze axe heads dug up by pigs at Rudham, coins, brooches, pins, harness-fittings from Iron age, Roman, Saxon, Viking and medieval periods, an early 11th century folded lead scroll from St Benet's covered in runes that have defied interpretation and may be in code, part of a lovely Limoge enamel crucifix figure dating from the 13th or 14th century – too many to list or remember. Norfolk has now it seems produced a third gold bracteate (see *BAHS Newsletter 17* and *The Glaven Historian No. 7*).

Most remarkable perhaps of all the finds illustrated was a double-sided gold seal matrix which would have been attached to a ring. It is of late 7th century Meovingian origin and is of such high quality and with an inscription of such intimate detail that it is considered likely that it belonged to the wife of the Merovingian king Clovis. She was English and after his early death reigned as regent before retiring to a convent near Paris. She was highly revered and subsequently canonised. Her ring, if it is indeed hers, was found at Postwick and will, it is hoped, become part of the Norwich Museum collection.

*Frank Hawes with additional notes  
from Derek Schofield.*

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## Wrecks and Rescues

*Report on a BAHS lecture by Charles Lewis  
(30 x1 04)*

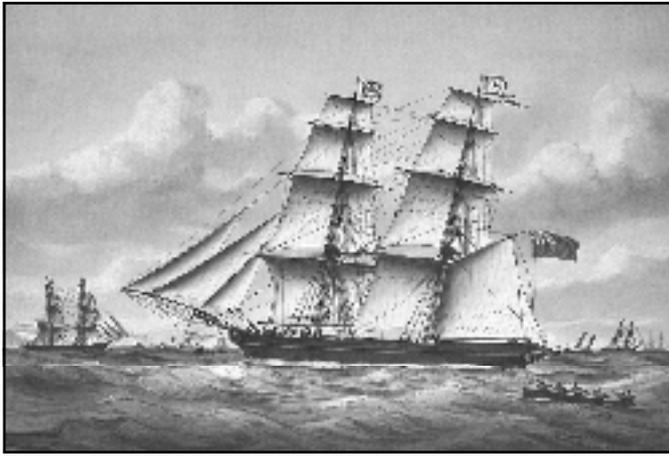
The Norfolk coasts have for centuries been one of the busiest shipping routes around Britain, but there are few safe havens. Even the relatively secure Yarmouth Roads can only be reached via gaps in parallel and hazardous sandbanks.

Amongst the wrecks described by Dr Lewis was that of the "Invincible" in 1801. Sailing late to join Nelson's fleet before the Battle of Copenhagen, the ship was wrecked off Norfolk's east coast with the loss of 400 men. On another occasion, in 1854, no less than 50 ships were wrecked in a single violent storm. Tragedies such as these had earlier led to efforts to mitigate the off shore hazards. The introduction of beacons (open fires contained in braziers) in church towers and other tall buildings around the coast was the first step. Then followed towers built for the sole purpose of providing beacons to act as sea marks; Elizabeth I granted an exclusive licence to Trinity House to construct and operate them. This was not the end of private initiative, however. Trinity House often sub-contracted its responsibilities and successive sovereigns, including Elizabeth herself, sometimes overrode the Trinity House monopoly.

Four lighthouses in Norfolk (Hunstanton, Cromer, Winterton and Happisburgh) and their development were described by Dr Lewis. The rationalisation of onshore lights was followed in the 18th century by the development of floating beacons – the lightships, all now replaced by automatic light-buoys.

Measures to mitigate navigational hazards were accompanied by steps to help mariners and ship owners when disaster occurred. The initial motive was the prospect of salvage and led to the development of "beach companies" by longshoremen banding together for the purpose. The Norfolk beach companies used their distinctive fast yawls, but these were gradually replaced by purpose built lifeboats. Local committees raised subscriptions for lifeboats to serve particular localities and in 1823 the Norfolk Association for Saving the Lives of Shipwrecked Mariners was formed. In 1858 the RNLI took over country wide responsibility – but Norfolk nevertheless retained two private boats (Sheringham and Gorleston) for many years.

19th and 20th changes to ships, navigational aids and to lifeboats themselves led to the RNLI and Trinity House reducing services across the country. The Caister lifeboat was withdrawn in 1969 – but it was reintroduced by a voluntary association in 1973. Similarly Trinity House wished to close the Happisburgh light in 1988 but local fishermen obtained the right to operate it. So Norfolk has, uniquely, both a lifeboat and a lighthouse in private operation. Dr Lewis rounded off his talk by describing some of the apparatus developed by George Manby, born in Denver in 1765. Amongst his inventions were a means of getting lines aboard stricken vessels by gunshot and the development of the breeches buoy – leading to the rescue of many mariners. DS



Print of the brig Rokeby, part of a limited edition of 250, high quality colour lithography, available from the History Centre.

## The Rokeby

The History Centre has just a few prints from a limited edition of a high quality (lithographic) reproduction of the brig the *Rokeby* for sale at the unbelievable price of £28.

The original painting of the brig was for the master of the vessel, Captain T. Starling by the marine artist Francoise Carlebur Junior of Utrecht in 1856. She was built in Hull, 1844 for Winter and Company and later purchased by the Temples of Blakeney from where she continued to trade between East Coast ports and the continent, sailing under the Blakeney born master, Thomas Starling.

This limited edition of 250 was made primarily for distribution around the family and for their enjoyment, so this offer is an unusual opportunity for BAHS members. Don't miss out! Visit the History Centre to view our copy, which has been kindly framed for us by a local donor and Picturecraft of Holt, or call 01263 740388 for more details.

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## NRO Visit

Following the very successful lecture given by Dr John Alban (yes, his foot is *much* better, thank you for asking), Geoff and Brenda Worton have arranged a BAHS tour of the new Norfolk Record Office at Martineau Lane.

This will take place on **Monday 7 March**, starting at 2pm sharp and finishing about 4pm. You will have to make your own way there, though no doubt car-sharing can be arranged. There is no charge for this visit, other than the cost of getting to Norwich, though the NRO will expect a small "donation" so don't be tight.

Numbers are strictly limited to a maximum of 16 so early booking is recommended. Phone the Wortons on 01263 588048 to book your place.

## Committee Report

While AGM business may been bundled unceremoniously out of the way in record time, the subsequent committee meeting on 22 September took considerably longer. Now the dust has settled the new look committee is as follows:

Chair:	Richard Kelham
Secretary	Frank Hawes
Minutes Sec	Brenda and Geoff Worton
Memb Sec	Anne Maw
Treasurer	Anne Maw
Events Org	Pam Peake
NL Editor	Richard Kelham
Members	Helen Brandt
	Derek Schofield
	Monica White
	Peter Wordingham

Pam Peake has decided to stand down both as co-Chair and as Events Organiser from the end of the current season (that is July 2005) so we *urgently* need a replacement for this vital job – Events Organiser that is, Chairs are two a penny. Without a replacement *there will be no programme of talks next year*. Understudies also welcome.

Peter Wordingham will be organising the next UEA course and Monica White will be the Course Secretary – assuming a suitable course can be found: after 12 years we are beginning to run out of subjects – and lecturers. If any members have suggestions for suitable subject areas let Peter know and he will try to negotiate with Adam Longcroft (UEA Extra-Mural boss) to see if it is possible.

Frank Hawes has volunteered to take on the main Secretarial duties, leaving Anne as Membership Secretary and Treasurer. He will also be keeping our page on the Glaven Valley website up to date. Speaking of the website, has any member ever managed to *find* our entry? Perhaps we should have our own website? Any volunteer out there speak Html?

There is also a vacancy on the Editorial Board for the Glaven Historian so if anyone with suitable experience feels like putting that experience to use for the BAHS please contact Frank or yours truly.

We generally try to run one or two excursions to places of historical interest during the year. At the moment we lack an Excursion Organiser. Perhaps I should have called this column "Situations Vacant".

Help with the tea/coffee making, and especially with the clearing up after meetings, will always be welcomed by the hard-pressed committee stalwarts. To make that last job a bit easier there will be no biscuits! Clearing up the crumbs with the chapel's antique carpet sweeper was just too much of a pain in the whatsit.

Meanwhile Pam will be working her socks off at the History Centre...

# Spring Programme 2005

There will be a modest charge of £1 for members attending the meetings whilst all non-members will be charged £2. There will be no additional charge for any refreshments that may be provided. Remember to renew your subscriptions (due 1 July for the year 2004-5) in order to enjoy reduced entry rates to meetings and to receive your copy of the Glaven Historian No.8..

## 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.

- January 25    **Update on Blakeney Eye dig, Tales from Thornage, a slide show of old postcards, and a demonstration of some new equipment using pictures of church graffiti.**
- February 22    **Exploring N Norfolk Prehistory**  
*Trevor Ashwin*
- Wednesday  
February 23    **The Cockthorpe Project**  
(meet at Cockthorpe Church 10.30)  
*Book on 01263 740388. Cost £3*
- March 29    **The Pastons – A Great Norfolk Family**  
*Peter Bradbury*
- April 26    **Industrial Archaeology at Letheringsett**  
*David Durst*
- Saturday  
July 23    **Annual Summer Lecture: Nelson, Norfolk and the Navy**  
*Charles Lewis*  
At Blakeney Village Hall, start 8pm

## Fieldwork and Outings

### 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.*

### Norfolk Record Office

*Monday afternoon, 7 March 2005*

*see details on page 3*

### Walk on Kelling/Salthouse Heath

Led by Trevor Ashwin.

*Thursday morning, 7 April 2005*

*Cost £4*

## History Centre News

The Centre will be closed for Xmas and the New Year, reopening Tuesday morning, February 1st 2005. During this interval the Centre will be cleaned and slightly rearranged so that a wonderful new collection of resources can be placed on the open shelves. Meanwhile, details of all forthcoming events will be displayed on the new Notice Board that has been kindly provided by the Village Hall Trust.

## The Cockthorpe Project

Cockthorpe is a small hamlet within easy reach of the Glaven villages and will make a splendid local history topic for those members who would like to participate. There are many facets that could be explored both on foot within the parish and back in the History Centre where some parish records for Cockthorpe are available. This could be an on going project divided into many manageable sized sections spread over a few years. Members will be free to join in with any part that appeals to them.

Phase 1 will be centred on the church and will start Wednesday February 23rd, 10.30am at All Saints Church when Church Historian Lyn Stilgoe will give us a guided tour and explain its history, architectural style and custom. This will be followed by the preparation of an architectural plan of All Saints with Frank Hawes and recording the Monumental Inscriptions with Pam Peake, both tasks to be completed during March.

The fee for this phase, including the lecture, will be £3 from which a donation will be made to Norfolk Churches Trust, the custodians of All Saints. Seating in the church is limited so places must be booked in advance and car sharing will be arranged for those that request a lift to Cockthorpe.

## Salthouse History Website

The idea of a *Salthouse History Website* is to make some of the material from the Salthouse book, and also some material that didn't get into the book, available more widely for Salthouse people and ex-Salthouse people all over the world. Also it is hoped that people who began in Salthouse and ended up in far flung places like Yorkshire or France or New Zealand will contact the site with information and link up and find out about relations and ancestors.

If you have the opportunity to visit it please let Val Fiddian know what you think, or if you have photos you would like to show on it

<http://www.salthousehistory.co.uk>