



BAHS Newsletter

Number 21

July 2006



Working on the line; test pit digging at Wiveton Hall.

The next UEA Course

The Society's partnership course with the UEA this year will be **Pilgrims and Pilgrimages in the Middle Ages** with tutor **Matthew Champion** to be held at The Scout Hut, Blakeney Village Hall, Langham Rd., Blakeney starting on **Wednesday 4th October**, 10 to 12 am for 8 weeks. Plus a field trip of approx 4 hours. Course fee is to be advised.

Pilgrims and pilgrimage – holy day or holiday? Pilgrimage was an important element in the spiritual and secular life of the middle ages. Alongside the opportunities it provided for spiritual advantages it gave legitimate reasons for the common man to travel, socialise and gain experience of the wider world. This course will look at the experience of pilgrimage in its widest context. Who were these pilgrims? Why did they undertake such often arduous journeys? Lastly, just why was pil-

grimage such a popular pastime and why did it come to an end?

Enquiries and early bookings to Mr Frank Hawes, Gulls, High Street, Cley next the Sea, Norfolk NR25 7RR. Telephone no 01263 740981 or e-mail: hawes@cley1.fsnet.co.uk

Membership Renewal for July 2006 to June 2007

Name:

Address:

£10 individual/£14 family/£25 corporate

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

Stop-press: New date for Annual Public Lecture is 12 August (see back page).

News from the History Centre

Although a series of events may be planned ahead it is always a delight to respond to further requests from either individuals or organisations. The past few months alone have demonstrated just how wide-ranging this support can be with much attention directed towards Wiveton.

Spotlight on Wiveton

Earlier in the term, the Hobbies Club of Blakeney C.E.V.A. School were shown how to use the Church as a backdrop and source for clues when investigating the 15th and 16th century communities of the village. This was followed by an afternoon walk exploring aspects of the village as it stands today, all in preparation for the archaeological dig that was to take place in May. The walk began with the cannon and gun emplacement on the Green and moved on to Church Farm, the cottages faced with field and beach flints, then down Chapel Lane past the old Golden Goose, Primrose Farm and the barn conversion that was once the Rector's brew house to the house where Samuel Yell had lived earlier in the nineteenth century. From there the children were taken to Wiveton Hall where magical moments were spent exploring features of the Jacobean architecture, fine galleting, a later gentrification and the extension built to the north in 1908.

For those who missed the excitement of the 'dig' it was a project of the Higher Education Field Academy of the University of Cambridge designed to introduce secondary school pupils to the potential of archaeology as a subject for higher education and the said university in particular. The pupils taking part came from Aylsham, Stalham, Fakenham and Wells while at a local level the History Centre played a crucial role enabling two other groups to participate – two sets from our own Society and the other from Blakeney Primary School. Everyone had a hands-on experience of archaeology and at the same time found out more about the early history of the area. The participation of the Primary School was a major triumph; to see the excitement and joy on the faces of every one of the pupils (and the teachers) was infectious.

The whole operation was under the supervision of Carezza Lewis and her experts. The fieldwork involved a number of one metre square pits being dug to a depth of one metre. Easy, I hear you say but just look at the photograph on the front and see the effort required from our members! Layer by layer there was recording, filling in the boxes of the test pit forms, sifting, washing, sorting and bagging finds then numbering. And some of this accompanied by a thunderous storm on the second day.

What was found? Identifications of finds made on the spot show there was an interesting array of

pottery and tiles from Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and Modern periods, very few metal objects, but some pieces of early medieval coloured glass. In some pits layers of brick and flint rubble plus mortar suggest buildings once existed nearby and at one site there appeared to be a medieval mortar floor. All the material will be examined in greater detail and only then will a complete list of finds and identifications be available. It is hoped that Carezza Lewis will return sometime in 2007 to give a lecture on the results.

Finally and quite unexpectedly, the London live-ry company of Glass Sellers asked us at very short notice to provide guides for a tour of a local church. The only church available on the day was Wiveton and you can imagine their surprise when discovering a possible link between the church and their Poor Box, donated by John Greneway. Could he be related to Ralph Greneway in some way? They have gone away to investigate further.

Accessions

Gifts and purchases for the past few months have included the following resources:

- Copy of the Cley Burial Register, 1908-2000
- Collection of village and church guides
- Collection of newspapers relating to floods
- Indenture of property at Newgate Green, Cley
- Photographs of P Kearney's ship paintings
- Burials at Harton Cemetery, Westoe of people from the lower Glaven villages
- Copies of Cley postcards
- Aerial photograph of Blakeney
- MSS, Heraldry of Blakeney
- Catalogue, Sale of livestock from Morston Hall, 1865
- Refurbishment of Hill's Supermarket (photos)
- Map of Cley
- Don't Hassle me I'm Local
- Wells and Blakeney Lifeboats
- Blakeney 1942 War Census

Branching Out

The search for ancestors and living cousins continues apace with a steady stream of requests from visitors and members alike. Some folk arrive at the Centre ready to do the research themselves while others from further away write in asking for help. A new system is now in operation whereby written requests will be displayed on a notice board in the centre for six months and SAE are provided for replies. The following three families, with their extended connections by marriage, are currently being researched and requests for assistance have been made: Beavis/Pentney/Cornwell Thompson/Loads/Gidney/Starling/Adcock Waller



The caption supplied with this photograph reads; "Looking for structural evidence at All Saints with Rik Hoggett". You may draw your own conclusions...

If any of these names are part of your family then please feel free to collect an envelope and make contact.

Other family names currently being researched are the Southgates of Hindringham, Spurgeons of Aldborough and Cley, Wordingham, Cushings, Nichols, Cobon, and Spooner, all of Blakeney and finally Gerald Ackerman and Ernest Reid, who both came to live in Blakeney.

A selection of family trees will be available to view at the December meeting in the British Legion. Meanwhile there is always help on hand for your own research on Tuesday morning openings.

The Cockthorpe Project

The project continued in the New Year with a return to the church. First there was an afternoon spent examining some early wills that provided clues to rebuilding or replacing parts of the building followed by bequests for maintenance and memorials. This involved a brief introduction to palaeography with everyone successfully getting their eye into sixteenth century handwriting.

Then Rik Hoggett led a group of members around All Saints showing us how to look at the building, pointing out the obvious clues and highlighting the questions we should ask when trying

to reconstruct the structural sequence of the building. Nor should the inside be ignored for even though plasterwork may obscure structural detail, arches, windows and arcading can be particularly diagnostic.

We were urged to make a record of these observations by making notes and measured sketches, taking photographs and even by producing a detailed stone-by-stone record. Finally we were shown how to lay a base line around the church and challenged to produce drawings of the elevations of the church. Who is going to rise to the challenge?

Opportunities for Volunteers

This is a timely reminder that to succeed, the **History Centre** has to be used. If you would like to know more about what is on offer locally or have an hour or two to spare from time to time, what about offering to become a volunteer. There are a few 'front of house' opportunities and many more behind the scene activities and each of these would help you find your way around the resources and at the time support the Centre. Give it a thought then, under no obligation whatsoever, either call in or phone Pam Peake (01263 740388) in the first instance to explore the idea.

Reports of Meetings

Deserted Villages

Report on a lecture by Alan Davison

(25 April 06)

Many Norfolk villages alive with people in the medieval period have disappeared since, leaving barely a trace in the present landscape. Frequently it is only the church that remains, in isolation and often in ruins; the village that once stood nearby has gone – but why? The traditional answer is that the Black Death of 1349 caused such devastation that any survivors moved away. Alan scorned this suggestion: Little Ringstead, near Hunstanton, may be the only example in the county. He then gave a scholarly account of deserted villages in Norfolk, drawing on his extensive knowledge gained from years of experience walking ploughed fields to recover dateable pottery fragments and trawling through medieval documents in the Record Office and other archives.

Deserted medieval villages were first studied in the Midlands where most villages were compact settlements – most survived but some did not. Some vanished Norfolk villages fit this pattern of complete desertion. At Godwick just a ruined church remains, together with earthworks showing where the village streets and houses used to be. Pudding Norton has also disappeared as a village, and again only a ruined church and earthworks survive. Other earthworks in the vicinity have been ploughed out since 1946, a frequent occurrence in arable areas. The demise of Pudding Norton can be attributed to sheep farming, for it came into the ownership of a flockmaster who had large flocks of sheep in nearby Alethorpe and elsewhere. Despite this example, the wholesale conversion of agricultural land to sheepwalks rarely occurred in Norfolk – more usually landowners bought up land as it became available, or used their dominant position to ‘persuade’ others to sell.

Rather than disappear entirely, many Norfolk villages have moved from their original location beside an early church to a more convenient site elsewhere in the parish, often to the edge of a green or common where animal grazing would augment the diet of an expanding population. Wickmere village is now near the common, but its church stands isolated on high ground with Saxon pottery around it. Longham, a village that also stood around the now isolated church, moved to one end of the common in medieval times and then to the other end in the Tudor period – thereby leaving two deserted village sites but no deserted village.

This movement of villages around the landscape makes it very difficult to say how many ‘deserted villages’ there are. Moreover, compared with the Midlands, much of Norfolk has a more

dispersed pattern of settlement; as well as compact villages there are also many loose-knit settlements with outlying straggles of houses. Some of these have been abandoned too, so villages can shrink as well as move or disappear. More such small areas of former settlement could yet be found in the countryside.

Alan showed slides of former village sites, either as photographs from ground level or the air, or as plans of the remaining earthworks. Sometimes former roads, house sites and various enclosures can be distinguished. At Warham there are signs of a former area of settlement near the edge of the parish. A fieldbook suggests that this was Hales Manor, a placename that often seems to relate to fringe sites. At Wighton, a large area of earthworks with some medieval pottery, abandoned by the 16th century, may have been an extension of the village. Lyng, with earthworks and a fishpond, is unusual in that the site can be linked conclusively with documentary evidence.

At Holkham a large village was removed to make way for the Hall, leaving a smaller settlement at the former staithe (on the coast road). Just south of the park, Egmere, Quarles and Waterden form a group of deserted villages, though the church is still in use at Waterden. At Dunton the church and a couple of farms remain but the village seems to have faded away over a long period.

Bayfield is the only local example of a deserted village; here the ruined church remains but little else is now visible in the landscape. It was always a small village: in 1327 only 8 people paid tax, in 1524 only one, and by 1603 just one house remained. The few surviving documents suggest no reason for its demise – perhaps it was just a reflection of the precarious nature of medieval life when, particularly from the late 1200s, poor harvests, plague and cattle disease became increasingly common.

As well as showing us many examples of vanished settlements and explaining some of the reasons for their disappearance, Alan reminded us that the process continued into modern times with the depopulation of the Thetford Battle Area.

Alan mentioned that his earthwork illustrations were from recent surveys by Brian Cushion, featured in *East Anglian Archaeology* No. 104, but was too modest to mention his own numerous articles on the subject of medieval settlement. His book in the *Poppyland* series entitled *Deserted Villages in Norfolk* is well worth buying, and the recently-published *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk* contains his chapters on deserted medieval settlements and the decline in medieval population.

John Wright

Editor: Richard Kelham
phone/fax: 01263 740186
e-mail: richard.kelham@dsl.pipex.com

All text © BAHS and Contributors 2006

Farming in North Norfolk

Report on a lecture by Philip West

(28 February 06)

Though there was a quick nod in the direction of the great improvers Coke and Townshend, this talk focussed on the more mundane farming styles outside the "High Farming" system. Mixed farming seemed to be the way in this area with stock overwintered in the straw-strewn stock yard, that straw mixed with the animals' excrement being turned into next season's manure.

Muck spreading was hard, and if done on a warm day noxious, work. The manure would be carted from the yard (or wherever it had been heaped) and dropped off in piles about 8 yards apart. From there it was spread by hand in preparation for ploughing in. In Norfolk oxen were used as the main draught animals, only replaced by horses, at least by the more prosperous farmers, in the mid 19th century. A pair of horses could plough perhaps an acre a day – the basic design of a plough had not changed much for a 1000 years or more – the single blade carving a fairly shallow furrow; by contrast, modern ploughs dig much deeper, and usually half a dozen or more furrows at a time, taking a fraction of the time – and causing untold damage to the underlying archaeological features!

Planting was revolutionised by the seed-drill invented by Jethro Tull, but once the crop was growing there was much scope for hand work: beet and suchlike had to be singled out by hoeing, and though there were eventually horse hoes available, on many farms this remained hand work.

As the seasons rolled by, so the farmer's mind turned to harvesting his crops. Standing crops such as wheat, barley, and of course grass (for hay) were cut by hand by scything gangs – the leaders were known as Kings of the Mow – until the introduction of the sail mow machine in the 19th century. These cut but did not bundle, this work being the preserve of the women. Later machine binders came in: these would follow the mower scooping up the freshly cut crop and binding it into sheaves, held together by the now ubiquitous baler twine. The sheaves were collected into shocks/stooks (usage varied) to dry prior to being collected and taken to the rick-yard. Loading the corn stooks onto the wagon for transport was performed by hand (and pitchfork) into the 1950s and beyond – essentially unchanged since the 12th century. It took three men to build a stack with the help of a mechanical elevator. When finished it was thatched to keep out the weather prior to being taken down again for threshing in the winter months. It was fear of losing winter threshing work to machines which precipitated the Swing riots of the early 19th century, but the machines inevitably won.

Gradual mechanisation notwithstanding, agriculture was very labour intensive – especially at

harvest time when resort was had to specialist contractors, the forerunners of the present day gangmasters bussing their poorly paid eastern European labourers around the Fens every summer.

The arable fields of north Norfolk produced a surplus of produce which was exported coastwise and across the North Sea from the ports and creeks of the area. Much of the barley, the main crop, would be malted first at the large maltings that existed at Cley, Wells, Lynn etc (though none as magnificent as those at Snape) and there are tales of farm wagons laden with grain queuing up Westgate Street waiting their chance to load.

Some of the produce was consumed locally. Wheat would have gone to local mills – Blakeney windmill was last used in 1912, Cley a few years later – before the giant roller mills swept all that away. Malted barley also found local use in the breweries of the area, perhaps the most familiar to us being the Cozens-Hardy (later Morgans) establishment at Letheringsett.

Sugar beet was originally dug by hand before being sent by rail to the refinery, the mainstay of many rural branch-lines before Beeching decimated the system and left us to battle against the damn great articulated lorries that now clog up our lanes during the beet campaign. Mangel/mangolds were also dug by hand prior to being put in the chopper to prepare cattle feed. Cabbages and potatoes were also grown for local consumption.

Dairy cattle were to be found – milking was by hand naturally as effective machinery only became available in the 1950s. Again this was for local consumption. Sheep are still to be found here; in the middle ages wool was an immensely important crop and the foundation of much of the wealth of this area, wealth that is reflected in the fine churches that abound (but see Alan Davison's lecture for another consequence of the importance of sheep). Nowadays sheep are bred mostly for their meat, but the fold-coursing of the animals still plays a part in the fertilisation of the farmland. The last sheep sale at Hempton was in 1961.

Philip West had some wonderful slides that really brought his words alive – and showed graphically how the collapse in agricultural employment in the last 50 years has depopulated whole swathes of the county.

Richard Kelham

Yet another Appeal for Help!

Can we please have a few more volunteers to write up the season's lectures etc for the **Newsletter**. Thanks to Derek Schofield, John Wright, Frank Hawes, Clare Young and Anne Maw for their work – please continue – but help is wanted to save the members from more of me!

If you can volunteer to cover a lecture please contact the Editor before the event. You only need take notes and then write 300-400 words. Easy!



Interior view of the magnificent trading Hall That Robert Toppes had built to display his wares.

Visit to Dragon Hall and King Street, Norwich

(3 May 06)

King Street and, more especially, Dragon Hall were the foci of a visit on 3 May, the hottest day so far. Thirteen members assembled in Dragon Hall for a conducted tour of King Street which spans more than seven centuries of trade and urban living, and many changes in the use of buildings. There was Dragon Hall itself, built to display and sell cloth in the fifteenth century, the site close to the Wensum River and St Ann's Wharf, later to become a butchers, a rectory, and slum dwellings; Howards House, the garden house of the Dukes of Norfolk which had beautiful gardens down to the river and a bowling green, more recently the offices of a brewery, now deserted; St Juliens Church where Mother Julien lived and wrote – it is thought she took her name from the church, not vice-versa; St Peter Parmentergate churchyard (now unfortunately a night-time haunt of drug addicts); the Music House (now part of Wensum Lodge), the oldest house in Norwich; and many more details, such as parish boundaries, Norwich Union fire mark, old bricks, knapped flints, and old names of yards retained. The new residential buildings are in a style in keeping with the very old buildings – but not imitating them.

Exhaustedly we trooped back to Dragon Hall

for a reviving cup of tea or coffee, and then Chris Barringer, who has been involved with the project from the start, took over to show us round Dragon Hall itself. There was a model showing how Dragon Hall probably would have been when it was built by Robert Toppes for importing and displaying cloth for sale. The model showed a slipway and quay with a roadway leading right up to the Hall where the goods would have been stored in the undercroft. We also saw a photo of the excavations outside showing the foundations of numerous other buildings, including a smoke-house for, presumably, fish. These have all been covered up again. The roadway from the quay, for which there was evidence, has been reinstated as a short gravelled drive leading to an enormous arch where the goods were unloaded and taken below. We were taken to the undercroft where, in one part, excavations are still taking place, and in another a splendid vaulted ceiling. On our way up to the Great Hall we passed through a small room which had been part of a small rectory in the not so distant past. The Great Hall itself, built to impress, was magnificent in the public parts, but rather more cheeseparing out of the public eye. The north end appeared to be the trading end, while the south end, separated by a screen and not so well appointed, was the private office area. Also to be seen were the crown posts and one remaining intricately carved and painted dragon in a span-drel. The whole building has been very sensitively



John Peake, Clare Young and the others gather outside 125 King Street.

restored so that the Great Hall can be used for functions.

Chris emphasized that new discoveries are still being made and that the history of the hall has by no means been unravelled.

Clare Young and Anne Maw

Members interested in visiting Dragon Hall on their own can find out more by visiting the Norfolk and Norwich Heritage Trust website at <http://www.dragonhall.org>

If you consider all this internet stuff too modern, their phone number is 01603 663922.

Runners with cleft sticks should be directed to 115-123 King Street, Norwich, NR1 1QE

East Anglian Archaeology No.112 is devoted to a detailed and authoritative report of the excavation and survey that were carried out during the winter of 1997/8. This volume is required reading for anyone who wants to know more – indeed everything there is to know – about this remarkable building. Copies are usually available from the Dragon Hall gift shop (along with a variety of cuddly stuffed dragons – natch) for the princely sum of £24 (gulp!).

Help Wanted!

A member representative:

The duties required for setting up for each lecture venue for the Autumn UEA 2006 Course includes but is not limited to:

- Arriving approx 30 mins before starting time and departing approx 20 mins following completion.
- Unlocking and Locking the Scout Hut.
- Switching on and off the lighting and heating system as required.
- Organising equipment.
- Setting up and taking down the projector and screen as required by the lecturer.
- Arranging chairs and tables as required and replacing same.
- Liaising with lecturer on the day.
- Arrange a substitute person to set up if unable to do so on the day
- Maintaining and keeping the course register.

The Scout Hut keys will be made available for the duration of the course.

Please contact Frank Hawes on 01263 740981 if you are interested.

UEA Autumn Course

Our annual UEA course brings in much needed funds to the society and helps indirectly to maintain our membership fees at a reasonable level. This course is therefore important to the society and in previous years a committee member attending has normally undertaken to set up the venues at each lecture. However this year the committee has decided to reimburse the course fee for a member (or committee member) who is willing to attend the course and is able to set up the venue for the lectures – see above for details.

Coming soon to a bookshelf near you...

THE GLAVEN HISTORIAN



*The Journal of the
Blakeney Area Historical Society*

No.9

2006

Autumn/Winter Programme 2006

Events

All meetings (unless otherwise stated) are held on the last **Tuesday** of the month and start at **7.30pm**.
£2 for members and £3 for visitors, including refreshments.

We look forward to seeing you in 2006.

Saturday
August 12

Annual Public Lecture
Barrows, Bombs and Bracteates

The archaeology of the National Trust's East Anglian coastline
Angus Wainwright, Senior Archaeologist for the National Trust
Blakeney Village Hall, 8pm

Entrance £3 for all
NB: note the new date!

Tuesday
September 26

Cley Church

While sitting in the church be guided through its architectural wonders
Gerald Randall

A short AGM will precede this **meeting in Cley Church**

All the following meetings are in the Harbour Room at the British Legion Hall in the High Street, Blakeney starting at 7.30 pm

Tuesday
October 31

The Great Houses of East Barsham and Great Snoring: the speaker will draw on his vast experience and knowledge of these important family seats.
David Yaxley

Tuesday
November 28

Langham revealed 1500 – 1800:
undoubtedly this will be a thought provoking evening.
Essential for every Langham resident.
Mike Medlar

Tuesday
December 12

NB: not the last Tuesday in the month
A Christmas Muddle: a mixture – first a talk then wander around exhibits from members and the History Centre. Plus Christmas festivities. Come and meet your friends.

2007

Tuesday
January 30

Members Night: Details to be announced

Contact: John Peake 01263 740388

History Centre Diary Dates

Good news and sad news. Firstly the **History Centre Open Day** in August continues, allowing summer visitors an extra opportunity to explore the resources and purchase copies of the Glaven Historian which will be available, hot off the press. Members, who are not able to attend the summer meeting, will also be able to collect their copies at this time.

Open Day

Thursday 24th August, 10.00 – 16.00

Members' Nights

Sadly these evenings for members during the winter months have not been sufficiently supported to warrant the heating costs incurred and consequently they are suspended.