



BAHS Newsletter

Number 29

www.history-blakeney-area.org.uk

July 2010

Freda Starr Remembers...

The photograph of Freda Starr and her sister Ivy, keepers of the 'Village Shop' in Cley up to 1973, in the previous issue of the BAHS Newsletter seems oddly prescient as, quite unprompted, Lady Rowena Ryle popped in the other day with a manuscript written by Freda Starr and presented to the Ryle family on the death of Sir Martin in 1984. In it Freda recounted some of her memories of the Ryles – they were next-door neighbours for many years – in her own inimitable style. Lady Ryle has kindly agreed to extracts being published here.

Reminiscences of the Ryle Family by Freda Starr

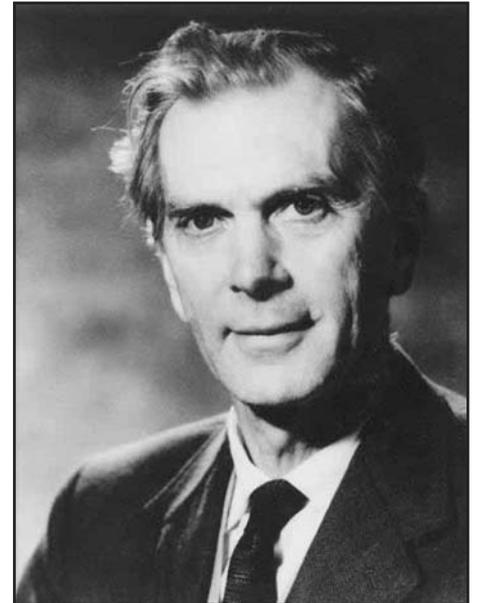
'The Ryle family came to Cley in June 1967 – 17 years ago; Mrs Ryle, who we found out later was Lady Rowena Ryle, often came into the shop & also, her younger daughter Clare, who was very fond of trying her hand at cooking, & of course, bought many of the ingredients at the shop. About this time, the inspector of shops had told us it was now law to have a shield on the knives of bacon machines – ours was several years old & was without one, so we contacted the makers, who sent a Rep. to advise us – after looking at the machine and with a good many "hums" and "ha's" he advised us to buy a new one – we were not very inclined to do this, as ours was in excellent condition & served our purpose well. While this debate was going on in the shop, Lady Ryle was in & heard

what was said & when the Rep. went out to his car to get a catalogue of new machines, she told my sister & I she felt sure her husband, Sir Martin Ryle, could make us a shield – "I'll go home & tell him" she said – so we told the Rep. we would consider his suggestions etc. & off he went. In a very few minutes Sir Martin came to find out what was wanted & said "Oh yes, I can make a shield in my Laboratory" – he took the measurements & in a very few days one arrived & it was a perfect fit & was in use when we sold the bacon machine years later – that great kindness saved us many £s.'

'The cottage in which they stayed, joined our premises, & there was a little window about 18 inches square, through which we talked – we discussed many things through that window, & goods were handed in & out, saving a lot of footsteps! especially to Charlie, who delivered!!'

The Ryle family still own and use 'The Folly' as a holiday retreat.

'When Charlie & I retired, Charlie decided he would try his hand at using my mother's sewing machine – it had not been used for many years, so he oiled & cleaned it & after great difficulty & patience in threading the bobbin, he was thrilled to really get it going – he done lots of odd bits of sewing for me at first, then he made me a nice bed cover out of odd bits of taffeta & he was



**Sir Martin Ryle 1918-1984,
Astronomer Royal**

away!!! Lady Rowena came in one day & saw what he was doing & said she had things she wished he would do for her – he agreed & many were the jobs he done – making – mending – upholstery – one garment was outstanding! It was a Shetland sweater of Sir Martin's, which he just couldn't part with – it was mended by machine at first, then as it became weaker, I took over & darned it – finally it was past redemption, so Lady Rowena had the brainwave to have it made into a draught stop, which Charlie did, so Sir Martin never had to part with his dear old friend!!!'

'When John, their son, & his family came to "The Folly" to stay, it was amusing to see the little boys looking over the wall or climbing the apple tree – on one occasion,

continued on p.7

News from the History Centre

July sees the start of a new year with a new set of challenges set by the History Centre for those members with energy, enthusiasm and a decided passion for the area. First there is an afternoon **Walk** through Old Blakeney planned for Thursday 5th August, **cost £10**. This will start with Blakeney Church as a backdrop for the community followed by an exploration of the quintessential flint and brick architecture of the local cottages set alongside the High Street and in the yards behind. The walk will end down on the bank with a panorama of the coastal landscape and the past maritime history revealed.

Then in October, as the days draw in, there will be a workshop on **House History** focusing on Cley, Wiveton and Blakeney. The extensive range of resources held by the History Centre will be explored and the location of other more unusual resources identified. If you have ever wished to know more about your own home or simply the village you live in, in more general terms, then this is both the time and opportunity to get started. Because of the wide-ranging nature of sources used, the course would also be invaluable for anyone wanting to know how to find their way around the History Centre.

The workshop will take place over three Wednesday mornings, Oct 27th, Nov 3rd and 10th. It will cover:

- * essential preliminary steps
- * maps and plans, including Tithe and enclosure maps
- * 1910 Land Valuation records
- * owners and occupiers from census records, Directories, electoral registers and taxation records
- * documentary evidence such as sale particulars, Title deeds and Abstracts
- * copyhold property from Manorial court records.

Phone 740388 to book your place. Both the walk and the workshop need to be booked in advance as places will be strictly limited.

Recent Accessions

The past few months have seen a variety of resources gifted to the History Centre. They range from single photographs, like Blakeney Choir, featured in **Picture Gallery** opposite, to two very extensive photographic collections, one of which is the **Hill Collection** that should be available for viewing from August.

Ken and Pauline Hill have very generously provided the Centre with a selection of just over 100 photographs. These cover family, such as young Ken seen here c1928, Hill's Home Supplies in several versions or "mark one, two and three" as Ken would say, village people and village events, some recent and some not so recent.

Just about everyone, who is anyone, has been recorded from participants at various Carnival events, to Fancy Dress at the Blakeney Hotel, Blakeney Players, the WI, church choir c1980, Basil's retirement party, school Christmas plays and sports day, Brownies, on the lawn at Highfield, Blakeney 12 and a recent Remembrance Day Service as well as all those colourful scarecrows. It is a wonderful addition to our photographic resources.

The second large photographic collection relates to old postcards and photographs of Blakeney and the surrounding area that have been loaned by Pete and Kay Thompson. Remember their wonderful selection of school photographs on show at the last exhibition, well this is more of the same. These photographs will take some time to copy and process and should appear in the Centre later in the year.

Then there are pedigrees of the Shorting, Emery, Butter(s) and Wrench families, a booklet on Cromer, a run of Norfolk Fair magazines and a railway map of Norfolk showing the Glaven Valley lines in place! Assorted church and village guides for Wighton.

Samplers also feature well with photographs of work by two



Blakeney schoolgirls, Harriet Dew and Sarah Ann Mansfield in 1860 that are now in the keeping of Gressenhall. Still a sampler but this time a Victorian canvas work pattern piece made between 1830 and 1880 as a 'visitor's book' sampler and presented as a set of 16 postcards. This was the work of Blakeney-born Mary Dowell née Brereton who was the daughter of the merchant Randle Brereton. She persuaded her guests, at Dunton Vicarage, to participate in the creation of the sampler.

Another large collection available for viewing now is news that has been extracted from **National Newspapers**, 1800 to 1890, concerning Blakeney, Wiveton and Cley. These newspapers range from the Aberdeen Journal in the north to Freeman's Exeter Post in the south, the Dublin Daily Commercial Advertiser in the west and the Hull Packet and East Riding Times in the east.

The range of news covered is vast: ship movements, social diary events, house parties, bankrupts, house and estate sales, cost of barley in 1800, and then in 1823 an account of foreign wheat held under lock and key in Great Britain on the night of April 5th. At this time Blakeney and Cley between them had 651 qtrs safely locked up. Then Blakeney church light as a shipping mark, pirates, gales, hunting appointments, vacant benefices and so



on. All in all, a wonderful read and a good reason for visiting the History Centre, soon.

Quite an eclectic mix you must agree and well worth a visit. Thank you one and all for your generous gifts.

Roots and Branches

The following list represents the main surnames currently being researched:

Digman of Blakeney and Cley
Russell/High of Blakeney
Dew/Waller of Langham and Cley
Carr/Clarke/Johnson/Randall from all the lower Glaven villages
Tillard/Cotterill of Blakeney

The Cley family photographs featured in Newsletter No.28 have produced a few answers. One of our members was able to identify Peter Catling's dog and then the name of his future wife who was sitting in the doorway beside him. They are Devil and Mary Bean respectively. With the identification came an offer of an opportunity to have copies of yet more photographs.

Slowly but surely, the photographic collections in the History Centre are growing, gaps are being filled and collectively they are becoming more meaningful. It really is a joy to see the look of wonder on the faces of visitors who come back looking for

records of their ancestors and then come face to face with photographs of family that have hitherto only been names!

Picture Gallery

This time the Gallery is offering two group photographs for you to consider and both groups are associated with Blakeney Church (see left). First is the cleaning group captured one hundred years ago in 1910 for which we have many names (sadly most without Christian names) and then secondly, the choir. The latter is a more recent photograph for which we have neither date nor any names.

The names we have for the cleaning group are as follows; Back Row (reading left to right): **1 Shorten or Breese, 2 Gooch** (Helen's father), **3 Peter Lynn, 4 Mack, 5 Shorten (Jimmy), 6 Pike, 7 Charlie Russell, 8 Blackmore, 9 Isaac Stanford, 10 Jimmy Lynn, 11 Balding, 12 Steadman** (organist at Holt), **13 John Wordingham**

Middle Row (reading left to right): **1 Mack, 2 Albert John Stearman** (manager of Page and Turner), **3 Reverend Lee-Elliot, 4 Reverend Jarvis, 5 Jimmy Bond**

Front Row (reading left to right): **1 Aston** (school master), **2 Shepherd, 3 Herbert Smith, 4 Peter Lynn** (yes there were two of them in the village at the same time and with the same name).

Is there anyone out there that can help with names? Please either call into the HC and put names to faces or ring me on 740388 if that is more convenient, thank you.

Winter closure for dust busting, stock taking and shelf sorting starts December 8th. The Centre reopens, 2011, on the first Tuesday morning in February.

Pam Peake

Committee Matters

Subscriptions

Yes, the time to renew subscriptions is upon us again, though you will be pleased to hear that there is no increase. Subs are due on the 1 July and should be sent to the Membership Secretary:

Mrs Barbara Ward-Jones,
Far House,
Coronation Lane,
Blakeney,
HOLT
NR25 7NS

Phone number and e-mail address are on the back page.

The rates are:

Single:	£10
Couple:	£14
Corporate:	£25

If you have an email address it would be very useful if you could let the Membership Secretary have it. You could then be notified of forthcoming meetings etc. We won't try to sell you Viagra or phony Rolex watches. Promise.

Glaven Historian

The next edition of the Glaven Historian should be winging its way to your doormat any time now – it went to the printers before this Newsletter was even finished.

Though the journal is now biennial, this one makes up for it a bit by having 96 pages, so getting the Glaven Historian free with your membership fee is even better value than ever.

In the last few years printing costs have risen rapidly. To reflect this the cost of extra copies has had to rise: £12 for non-members and £10 for members – still a good price for 96 pages of distilled wisdom!

On which subject we are already on the lookout for material for GH13.

Vacancies

There are vacancies for members of the committee.

Fresh blood is desperately needed, if only to bring the average age back to double figures...

OK so I jest, slightly. But we are not getting any younger and do need someone to share the work of running the Society. We do have a couple of new Officers – and a warm welcome to them – but we need more. If you are an enthusiastic member keen to support the aims of the BAHS, have a few evenings to spare, and preferably an e-mail address (much of the Society's business is conducted by email between formal committee meetings) we would love to hear from you. Don't be shy.

Boudica

By Dr John Davies
27 April

This timely talk, coming as it did during the 1,950th anniversary of the rising against the Romans by the native Iceni under Boudica's leadership, and also some six weeks after Melvyn Bragg chose her to be the subject of an episode of his splendid Radio 4 show "In Our Time", was a most enjoyable and enlightening experience. Dr Davies, Chief Curator and Keeper of Archaeology at Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, is an expert on the Iceni and their culture, and the author of at least two books on the subject; who better to talk to us?

Late Iron Age culture was rich in many material aspects, but it was an oral culture. There does not appear to have been a written form of their language (assumed to be an early proto-Welsh) so what we know of them, apart from what can be deduced from archaeological remains, is thanks to Roman historians such as Tacitus and Cassius Dio. It is Tacitus who gives us the name, the Iceni, of the tribe that occupied what is now Norfolk and northern parts of Suffolk.

It was common practice for the Romans when expanding their

empire to allow the leaders of neighbouring tribes to adopt the status of client 'king', the deal being that on their death their 'kingdom' would be bequeathed to the Roman Emperor. Thus the Romans expanded their empire on the cheap, much as the British were to do in the nineteenth century.

In this case, the King of the Iceni, and Boudica's husband, was Prasutagus (another name that has come down to us courtesy of Tacitus) and when he died in the year 60 CE he attempted to bequeath just half of his realm to the Emperor, the other half going to his family. Naturally this didn't go down too well in Rome: Nero despatched Catus Decianus, the Procurator of Britain, to secure the whole estate. Catus Decianus also attempted to reclaim monies which the Romans regarded as 'loans' but the Iceni regarded as gifts – tribute to their royal house.

This demand for repayment was taken as a serious insult compounded by the subsequent high-handed actions of the Romans who flogged Boudica and raped her daughters. The tribe rose in fury and with their Queen at their head marched south. Allying themselves with the Trinovantes, who occupied the area that is now Essex, south Suffolk and Cambridge and who had bones of their own to pick with the Romans, they went on to sack and raze the new Roman capital at Camulodunum (Colchester), after which they burned Londinium and destroyed Verulamium before marching north west to a final battle with the Roman legions near Mancetter.

In a battle as unequal as that between armoured riot police and a drunken Saturday night mob, the Iceni were slaughtered in their thousands and Roman rule was definitively established in their territory for the next 400 years. Colchester alas was rebuilt.

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BAHS and Contributors



Painted Churches

Medieval frescoes at Lakenheath and Houghton-on-the-Hill

May 24th was a hot Monday, and a group of keen BAHS medievalists set out in search of ancient frescoes, recently conserved. Our first stop was Lakenheath parish church. Matt Champion showed us the paintings which had remained a puzzle for many years. The nave north wall proved to be a palimpsest of no fewer than 6 different layers dating from the 13th to the late 15th century. Matt helped us to decipher the various layers, and explained the unusual iconography.

One fresco, dating to the 1350s, showed a Virgin and child, accompanied by St Edmund: a sign of the church's desire to be linked to the Abbey at Bury, rather than Ely (which abbey gave little help in the aftermath of the devastating pestilence). An earlier scheme had painted angels and a strange stylised tree; a later layer



had a cycle of the Passion.

After a thirst-quenching break at the Windmill at Great Cressingham, we headed up tiny lanes to Houghton-on-the-Hill, a scary ruined church I first visited over 30 years ago, when it had notices outside saying 'Trespassers will be shot'. How times have changed! Mainly thanks to the persistence of Bob and Gloria Davey since the 1990s, the church has been transformed, reroofed, refloored and reglazed. What is more, extraordinary frescoes have come to light: conservation work has been undertaken since 2006. The oldest may be very old indeed, possibly late 11th century, including arguably the

Above: Matthew Champion leads the discussion on a Lakenheath church wall painting.

Left: Close up of one of the wall paintings at Houghton.

photos John Peake

earliest known depiction of the Trinity in the form of the Throne of Grace (God the Father supporting Christ on the cross). Below this is one of the strangest depictions of the Last Judgment I have ever seen: a band of painted busts of Jesus and the apostles on one side, and a row of fox-faced demons on the other side. Further frescoes depict the Creation, Noah's ark and the wheel of fortune.

Bob Davey was there to show us round what, for him, has been a labour of love.

It was a great day out, and my thanks go to Diana Cooke for organising the details. If further 'church crawls' are wanted, please let me know.

Neil Batcock

Members' Night

Various speakers

26 January 2010

It was a full house for this now annual event and after the snows and severe frosts of December and early January the weather was kind. The evening consisted of three short contributions by members with a coffee break and time to muddle between the second and third talks.

The first talk was offered by Richard Jefferson and programmed as "Thanks to Google". Richard said that originally the presentation was to have been "The miracles of Google". He described how typing in 'Jefferson' he found many thousands of people of the same name and eventually, by being selective and concentrating on family connections from Weybourne to Australia, this resulted in a locally taken photograph being sent to him from Australia. It contained an image of a sporting gun that bore the name of a King's Lynn gunsmith.

Secondly, Pam Peake described the career of "Ralph Greenaway of Wiveton – London Grocer". Truly a story of 'local boy makes good'. Pam gave details of many variations in the spelling of both 'Ralph' and 'Greenaway' in the 1500s and 1600s. Ralph was the son of John Greenaway of Wiveton and was apprenticed for 7 or 8 years in 1532 to the Grocers' Company in London. In 1540 he became a Freeman and Citizen of London and an Alderman in 1556. In 1557 Ralph became master of the Grocers' Company. Sadly he died at the age of forty but at his death he was a very wealthy man.

Following the coffee break the Reverend Neil Batcock gave his talk entitled "Medieval Painted Churches". Surprisingly, the churches described were not English but Swedish and all on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea. The island is almost midway between mainland Sweden and Latvia and is predominantly Lutheran Protestant, equating with the Church of England.

Neil presented slides portray-

ing seven of the ninety-one Gotland medieval churches and one, at Garda, was seen to still have the original side stone seating along the walls. Another, at Stanga, is remarkable for its sculptures. The churches are all beautifully kept, walls painted white externally, and sit in extremely well maintained grassed grounds. The buildings have very steep roof pitches and very pointed spires.

The wall paintings are many and are well preserved and, of course, depict religious topics of the period and tend to have a Russian influence.

In some of the imagery depicted in Neil's slides interpretation is required with an understanding of the social and historical background of the medieval period. Another feature of the Gotland church is the exquisite crucifix positioned at a height to ensure one has to look upwards.

Another splendid evening.

D A Perryman

The Herring Fishery

by Dr Mary Fewster

23 February 2010

I learned about the herring fisheries at school and how as the shoals moved down through the North Sea, Yarmouth harbour would be full of drifters and the quay lined with fiesty Scottish lasses gutting herring at incredible speed and I ate my occasional kipper and thought that that was what it was all about.

Dr Mary Fewster came to our February meeting and in an informative and entertaining talk corrected my many false impressions. Those Scottish lasses had nothing to do with my breakfast. Herring caught by the Yarmouth fleet were smoked un-gutted in the traditional Yarmouth smokeries but at the height of the season the Scottish boats that far out numbered the Yarmouth fleet were met by their Scottish lasses who had come down overnight in special trains. The fish they gutted went into separate factories

around the town where they were pickled for the continental market.

The Yarmouth fishery had existed for centuries – in the eleventh century the town's taxes were paid in herrings – and markets had been built up locally and exporting golden cures to Italy, red to Turkey etc. We learned how the drifter developed from the Dutch Herring Busses and how the Scots took over from the Dutch after the Napoleonic wars. The Scottish companies built larger fishery works around Yarmouth in the 1880s and expanded their exports beyond Germany into Russia.

Dr Fewster told us how, at its height, the industry had had a major influence on many aspects of the local economy. In the nineteenth century agricultural labourers known as 'Joskins' worked on the drifters turning the capstans that hauled in the many yards of heavy nets. The arrival of the herrings neatly followed the agricultural harvest. It similarly came after the holiday season and gave the Yarmouth landladies a second season which in turn suited the local shops as the Scottish lasses traditionally bought their Christmas presents in Yarmouth before returning.

The years before 1914 were the height of the industry. In 1913 catches were huge but it was not a glut as everything was sold and large profits were made, then in 1914 drifters were requisitioned by the Admiralty for use as mine-sweepers and after the war, with Germany bankrupt and Russia in revolution the pickled herring industry struggled through the twenties and thirties. Boats were requisitioned again in 1939 and after that war the gutting lasses who came were those who had always come – there were few new recruits. When the herring stocks began to fail in the 1950s the industry was already struggling against these staff problems and difficulties of rebuilding markets after the war. The last of the Yarmouth fleet was sold to Lowestoft in 1964.

Frank Hawes

Feedback

Mrs Hilda Knott, sweetmaker

Following the publication of the last Newsletter, John Ebdon supplied me with a further invoice relating to Mrs Knott's sweetmaking enterprise at Cley Hall and also a photograph of the Hall showing the single storey extension erected in the early 1950s – at what was the absolute nadir of British architecture. This structure, truly deserving the “carbuncle” epithet, clearly visible in the photograph, and to any approaching visitors, is the single storey, flat roofed thing to the left of the photograph. Such an eyesore would not be permitted nowadays, not even to the gentry, for which we should be grateful.

The invoice is later than the two published last time dating from Oct/Nov 1951. It is for four batches of barley-sugar, each batch being 11lb 10 oz in weight (about 0.7 kg in new money) and costing three shillings and sixpence ha'penny, plus eleven pence postage. At the bottom there is a plea: “please may I have your new sheet of personal points”, a reminder that sugar was one of the last things to come off-ration, in September 1953. Bizarrely, sweets had come off-ration in February 1953. Work that one out.



Cley Hall front elevation in c1960 showing the ‘sweet-room’ extension on the left.

continued from front page

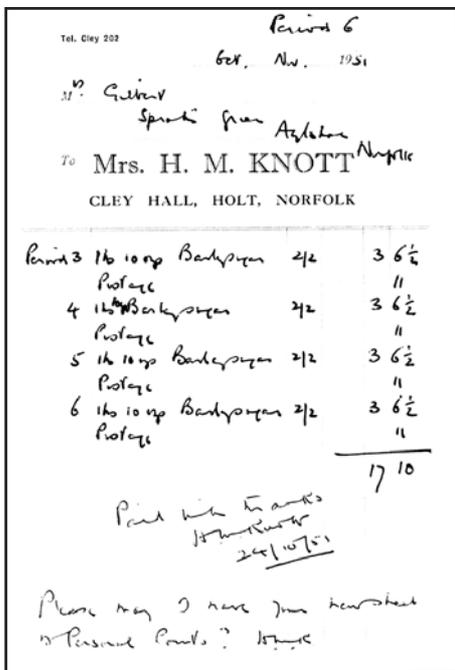
they had thrown their mother's hat over & there were some very anxious looks 'over the wall' until I saw what had happened & passed it back!!

'Many times, both Sir Martin & Lady Rowena said to me, “you ought to write a book” & I said “Oh no, I couldn't” – however, after more time, I decided I would “have a go”, just to please them, which I did – it took me a year to write of village life as I remembered it & of my own experiences in Cley through the years. When it was finished, I sought the advice of Bishop Jim Bishop who was born & lived in Cley many years & who had now retired here – I contacted who he advised & several others, with no result, & I almost gave up in despair any thought of it being published. Mrs Susan Rhodes, who now lived in my old home, Commerce House, kindly offered to type the script for me – while she was doing this, Mr & Mrs Grove, who had stayed at Commerce House for bed & breakfast during the summer & were now taking refuge there while they cleared up their house at Blakeney, which had been badly flooded by a high tide, read the script, came to see me & offered to try to get it pub-

lished. I readily agreed & after trying without result in London, Mrs Grove sent it to Anglia Television, & through them & Mr Dick Joice it was eventually published by the Boydell Press in 1979. It was a great thrill to me & also Sir Martin & Lady Ryle to whom goes the credit for the book being written & to Mrs Grove, who got it published.'

'It has been a privilege to know the Ryle family & I am sure I speak for all who got to know them since they came to Cley – also, I know how sorry everyone was when Sir Martin became too ill to come & finally, died in October this year (1984). He was a brilliant man, but always willing to do the small things which make such a difference to so many people. Our love and sympathy goes out to Lady Rowena & her family in this great loss.'

The book is still available from her old shop as well as the 'Crabpot' bookshop and the History Centre Blakeney in a third edition published by Terry Johnson when he had The Old Butchers bookshop and gallery, a site that is now the Pinkfoot Gallery, but Freda's day had been Hopkins' butchers shop.



Autumn/Winter Programme 2010-11

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

Entrance: £2 for members and £3 for visitors, including refreshments.

Tuesday
September 28

Flying around in Circles – Drones and the Stiffkey

Whirlygig: a fascinating and intriguing story from the Cold War.

Fred Butcher

A short AGM will precede this meeting.

Tuesday
October 26

Keeping your hand in: a social history of the GP and cottage hospitals in East Anglia.

Dr Steven Cherry (Reader in History, UEA)

Tuesday
November 30

Ruined and Disused Churches of Norfolk: in 1991 Neil published a seminal work on the churches of Norfolk and in this talk he will review and expand some of his ideas.

Rev Neil Batcock

Tuesday
December 14

Christmas Mardle: celebrating 20 years of the BAHS with a mixture of exhibits, seasonal festivities and a short talk by Dr Christopher Barringer

who played a crucial role in the formation of the Society. His talk will be entitled: **To Include or not Include:** reminiscences from writing his new book 'History of Norfolk'.

Tuesday
January 25

Members Night: an interesting series of short talks including:

Out and about: changes in transport and the effect on working-class leisure

Carol King

Details of other talks TBA

Reminders of all meetings are sent out to members every month by email, if you haven't received one it could be for two reasons, the Society does not have your present email address or the settings on your email programme result in this type of message being rejected as 'spam'. If the former and you would like to receive reminders let the Membership Secretary know your email address; if the latter change your spam filter settings.

History Centre Diary

Open: first and last Tuesday in every month, 10am till noon. Other times by arrangement.

Members' Sessions: Monday afternoons start again November 1st and then December 6th. Remember there is a £1.00 entrance fee.

See 'News from the History Centre' for details of **A Walk through Old Blakeney** and **House History**.

For more information: www.history-blakeney-area.org.uk

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