



BAHS Newsletter

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Cley church Lychgate?

see inside for more information,,

Revelations from Cley Churchyard

by John Peake



Last October when a long trench was dug through Cley Churchyard, there was an opportunity to let one's imagination run riot and anticipate all the exciting discoveries that could be made. Already there were studies of the architecture and graffiti of the Church to sharpen the appetite, while there was speculation that remnants of religious images destroyed at the time of the Reformation might be buried nearby.

The trench was dug to a depth to 2 - 3 feet to accommodate a drain to run from near the West Porch of the Church to the main gate on the Holt Road. Sarah Bates, a freelance archaeologist, kept a watching brief on the work (Photograph 1) and at this early stage I am grateful to her for sharing some of her preliminary impressions of the dig.

Unfortunately little was found near to the Church, but close to the main gate the remains of a narrow brick and stone structure

aligned north/south in the trench was discovered at a depth of nearly three feet (Photograph 2). The position so close to the present entrance of the Churchyard, undoubtedly stimulated the suggestion this was the remains of a lychgate. Lych is an Old English or Saxon name for a corpse, hence lychgate for the place where the corpse was rested and where the burial service began.

Is there any historical evidence for a lychgate at Cley? A brief search has produced some intriguing information. Both the inclosure map (1812) and the original tithe map (1841) indicate the Holt Road ran against the Churchyard entrance, with the cottages to the west abutting directly on the road with no grass verge separating them from the road as exists now. The entrance to the Churchyard was narrower with a building forming the boundary on the west side. So at the beginning on the 19th century there is no evidence for a lychgate,

although this does not preclude one existing earlier before properties to the west were built and encroached on the Churchyard. While to the east the entrance abutted a field where today 'St Margaret's Fair' is held. This was not church property in the early 19th century, furthermore the level of this field is much lower suggesting the construction of a lychgate in that direction would have been difficult.

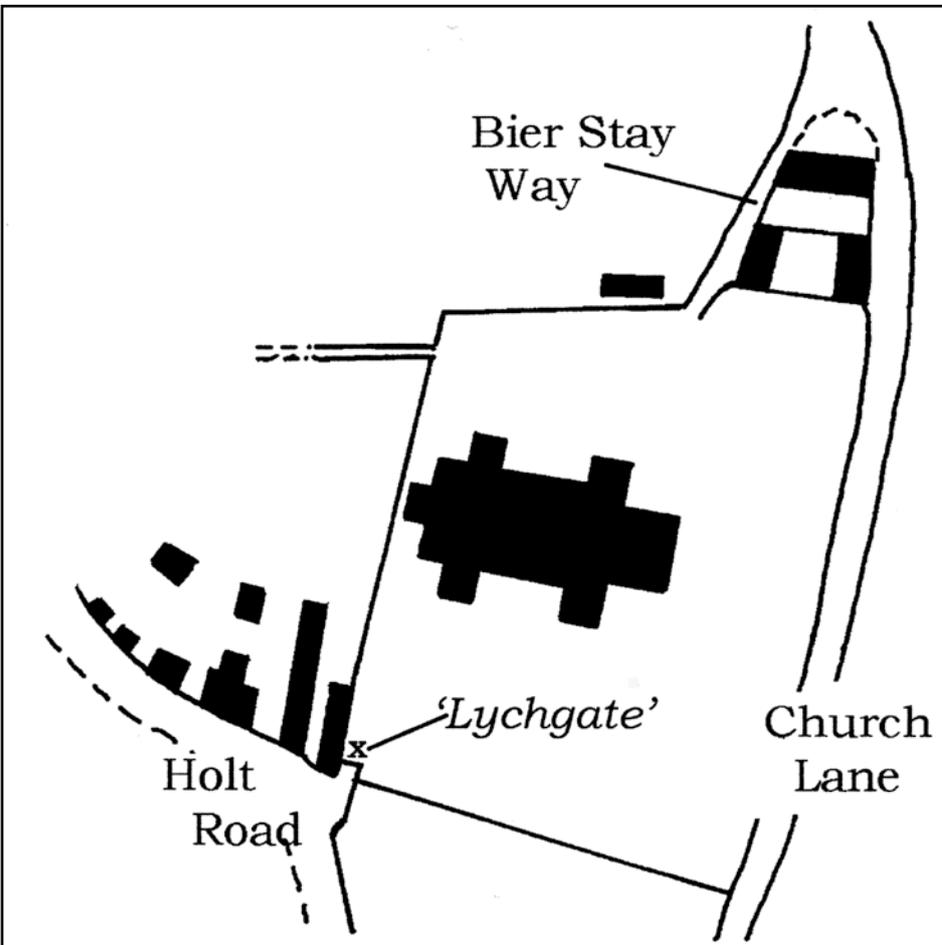
In the past there were different access points to the Churchyard including one clearly recognised in the Cley Terriers as from a 'Common Way' off Church Lane to the north. This route would have passed alongside an earlier parsonage plus a guild house and interestingly in a document dated 1704 this lane was called 'Bearshe-way', a plausible corruption of 'bier way' defining the route a corpse would have been conveyed to the Church. This was confirmed in an 1824 conveyance of land referring to 'Bier Stay Way'.



So there could have been a lychgate here at the northern entrance to the Churchyard, but don't despair there are examples from other churches of more than one lychgate existing when there are multiple entrances to a churchyard.

Photograph 3 illustrates some additional information: the cross section of the trench wall shows that at some stage the brick and stone structure was buried in an orderly manner beneath successive layers of chalky soil. This suggests that soil levels were built up to make the entrance to the Churchyard a gradual incline from the road which formerly was at a lower level. Indeed there may even have been one or two steps between the two. There are further implications, as when the Holt Road was moved away from the cottages and the Churchyard to its present position the surrounding land surface was landscaped, including raising the road surface.

Unfortunately the question whether the enigmatic structure was part of a lychgate is still unresolved and more research is needed, nevertheless the dig has succeeded in stimulating some interesting speculation.



Captions

Left: Sketch map of area around churchyard based on 1841 tithe map

This page upper: Photograph 1, Sarah Bates working in the trench.

Front Cover: Photograph 2, Looking south – a 'council of war' discussing the preservation of the enigmatic structure.

Opposite page: Photograph 3, close-up of the trench, showing the brick and stone structure together with the layers of visible chalky soil.

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History Centre News



The past year has seen both achievements as well as setbacks for the Centre.

Significant amongst these was recognition of the status of our records by the Norfolk Record Office and then the invitation to attend the renaming of the older of the two Lifeboat Houses by University College London as the Francis Wall Oliver Research Centre. It was an opportunity to meet up with descendants of Professor Oliver who was so hugely instrumental in ensuring that Blakeney Point was passed into the guardianship of the National Trust, 1912.

The disappointment has been the delay in placing the model of the lifeboat, *Hettie*, in Blakeney church. Coincidentally, the real *Hettie* was housed from 1873 till 1891 in the very same building that is now the Francis Wall Oliver Research Centre. This delay is due in part to the windows being restored and or replaced in the north aisle as well as attending to

Opening ceremony of the Francis Wall Oliver Research Centre, 2015

urgent repairs on the roof. A large bucket has been standing for some months now on the spot reserved for *Hettie*! Just as soon as this work is completed and the dust has settled we will have our display board back in the north aisle where it will be joined by *Hettie*, positioned in front of her RNLI Service Board.

Recent Research

The variety of research carried out at the Centre never ceases to amaze. The following list is just a selection of some of the research topics where solutions have been sought by visitors from the records held by the Centre. It includes:

- Page and Turner merchants
- location of Reverend Crowe Munnings's home in Cley c1700s

- history of Blakeney's Duck Pond
- P. Kay's survey of Blakeney churchyard c1980s
- identification and location of property in Cley from three postcards
- house histories of the following cottage in Ratcliffe's Highway, Cley
Neal Cottage, Greencroft and the Butts, Blakeney
Allendune/Mallard's Reach, Blakeney
- Yankee and her remains on Yankee Ridge
- quantities of coal landed at Blakeney c1860-1880
- Sailing Club history and the Blakeney One Design
- Cooper's brew house in Blakeney together with the sale of the Crown, 1839

Roots and Branches

Family History has also featured during the year with the following families, in particular, being researched in some depth;

Allen of Surrey and Blakeney

Baynes of Cley, London and York

Dew of Norwich and Wiveton

Durrant of Holt and Cley

Harvey of Blakeney

Hiram Carter of Blakeney, Gloucestershire!

Howes of Cley

Jackson of Blakeney and Cley

Hudson of Blakeney and Wiveton

Mitchell of Weybourne, Cley and Blakeney

Page of Walsham le Willows, Norwich, Brinton and Blakeney

Parsons of Blakeney and Little Snoring

“Census Substitutes”

1770, 1939, 1942

Blakeney is rather fortunate amongst the Glaven villages in having two census substitutes, both of which may be found in the History Centre. Time wise, they sit either side of the government's decennial censuses that are currently available.

Firstly, the Ecclesiastical census of 1770; a listing of communicants made by John Barber for Bishop Young's second visitation on 20th June. At this time 458 people were recorded living in 100 households. Children under 16 years of age were not named but given simply as a total under a parent's/guardian's name. The community can begin to be unravelled when this census is used in conjunction with the parish registers.

Secondly, the Wartime census of 1942 prepared by the Village Invasion Committee. Again children are numbered but not named while adults are given as able bodied, either under or over 65 years of age and separate from those that are physically unfit, but of no particular age.

In all there were 559 people living in Blakeney, a figure that included some 30 women and children evacuees from London. Villagers lived in 221 households whilst a further 11 were occupied by the Military and 31 were recorded as empty at the time. A transcript and analysis of the 1942 census can be found in Glaven Historian No12, 2010.

Returning to the decennial cen-

suses, these are the “bread and butter” documents for family, community and social historians as well as government statisticians. They began in 1801 and have recorded the names of all people in households since 1841. The census of 1911 is the latest available to us because of the Census Act 1920; this states there has to be a 100-year gap before any individual's census details can be released.

Consequently the 1921 census will not be released until January 2022, which will then be followed by a 30 year gap until 2051 as no census was made during WWII and the 1931 census was destroyed by fire in 1942.

The National Archives have been looking for a way to “plug this gap” and in collaboration with Findmypast they released a census substitute, the 1939 Register, just before Xmas. However, rather hefty subscription costs are involved in addition to other charges.

Dubbed the “Wartime Domesday Book” the 1939 Register is a comprehensive survey of the English and Welsh population made 29th September, 1939 just 26 days after hostilities had been declared. 65,000 enumerators collected just over 41,000,000 names. The information gathered, apart from names, was sex, age, occupation, address, marital status and then whether an individual was with naval, military or air force reserves or with any auxiliary forces or civil defence services or reserves.

This enabled the issue of Identity Cards, plans to be made for mass evacuations, the establishment of ration books and co-ordination of other wartime provisions. These records later formed the basis of the National Health Service's records.

Remember, when searching this record for your family, the privacy rules still apply albeit in a rather bizarre way. Thus any living individual younger than 100 years today will have their entry withheld while centenarians, of whom there were approximately 14,450 in 2014 when the records were prepared, will have no such protection! So keep looking,

Names will come on line as individuals either die or reach 100.

The Blakeney Wartime Census of 1942 sits nicely alongside this 1939 Register as it provides additional information, especially for those individuals withheld from the Register, and shows how empty buildings in the village had been requisitioned for both service personnel as well as evacuees. It is well worth looking at first before you start to search the Register.

Changes ahead

The History Centre is currently finding it an impossible challenge to keep up the variety of services and activities that members and public alike have come to expect and enjoy since we first opened our doors some 13 years ago. This includes all the out of sight effort. None of it happens by magic, it all depends on volunteers of which we presently have far too few.

Consequently from 2016, the Centre will open by appointment from February to November. Bookings for appointments must be made in advance of the intended visit and will be subject to a charge. This will ensure that a volunteer is always available, suitably briefed and that full access to all the archives, readers and computer is guaranteed.

Meanwhile the number of Tuesday morning openings is being reduced. These will be limited to the first Tuesday in the month from April to October.

There may be additional openings during the summer and if so, they will be announced on the BAHS web site and posted on the Notice Board outside the History Centre at the rear of Blakeney Village Hall.

If you have any concerns about these changes, suggestions or even offers of help, then please contact the Manager on 01263 740388.

Pam Peake

Fieldwalking along the Dudgeon Offshore Wind Farm Cable Corridor

by Eric Hotblack

The Dudgeon Offshore Windfarm is to consist of an array of sixty-seven 6 Megawatt wind turbine generators, twenty miles off Cromer. Submarine cables twenty-six miles long will connect it to the shore at Weybourne Hope, while onshore the cable route runs for a further thirty miles to a substation at Necton, near Swaffham, where it connects to the National Grid.

The rather zig-zag land route was planned to avoid known archaeology as much as possible. Allen Archaeology have conducted a fieldwalking survey and a magnetometry geo-physical survey. In 2014 a number of archaeological survey trenches were dug, some targeting features shown up on the magnetometry survey and others at more random locations along the route.

When the work commenced in spring 2015 on the onshore route, some further archaeological excavations were carried out, in addition to a watching brief as the top-soil was excavated. Because these surveys were funded by the developer, all this information is still confidential and owned by Dudgeon Wind Farm until it is made public on completion of the project, although news of the discovery of a Roman villa did leak out.

Other work has been carried out by amateurs along the route. In Bale 4.3 hectares (10.6 acres) has been intensively fieldwalked on four arable fields. The flint finds are mostly undatable flakes, but some small tools have been found, such as:

- A Mesolithic notched bladelet
- A late Mesolithic/Neolithic blade
- A Neolithic blade

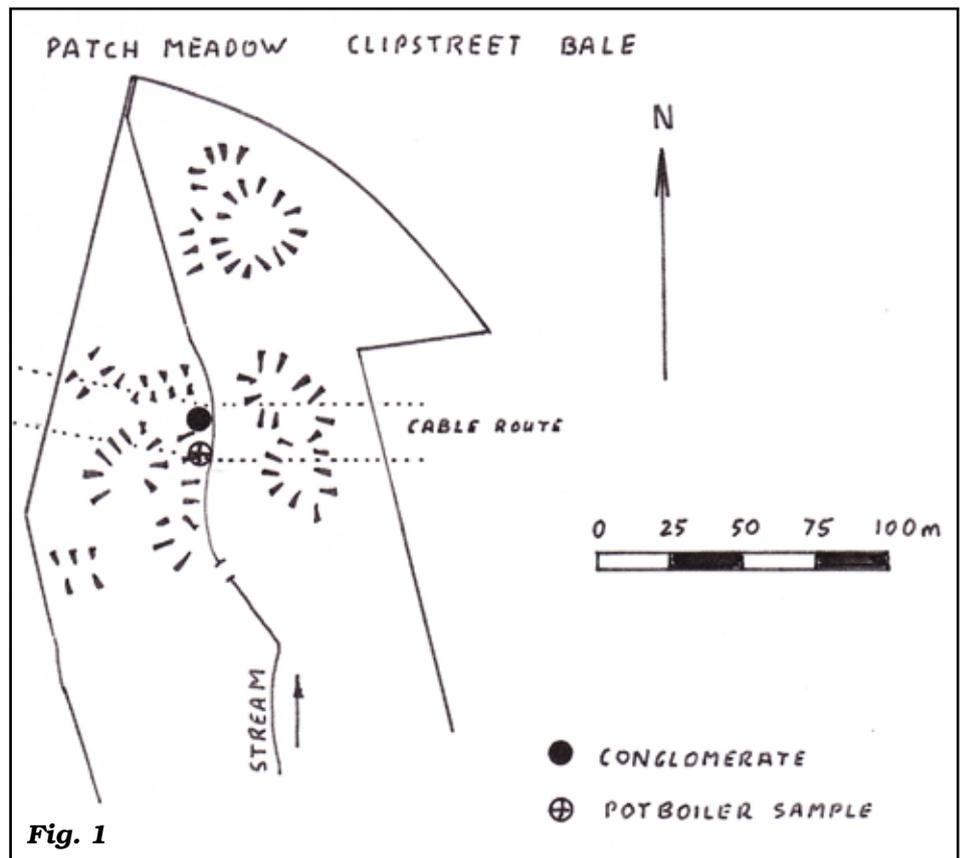


Fig. 2. Looking north on the west bank of the stream. Dark patches below the measure are conglomerate. Burnt soil and flints are visible behind.

- A late Neolithic/early Bronze Age oval thumbnail scraper

The pottery finds range through:

- Iron Age
- Romano-British
- Early Saxon
- Early or mid Saxon
- Late Saxon Thetford-type ware
- Medieval
- Medieval/post Medieval
- Post medieval

In addition finds have been made of iron slag and clay tobacco pipe stems.

Where the route crosses a minor tributary of the river Stiffkey it crosses a meadow (see plan). The rather 'cratered' surface of the meadow looks as though it has been dug by man, but a geological explanation is that the holes are pingos. Pingos are created when water freezes below the ground surface, forcing the ground up in a mound. Later, when the ice thaws, the ground

surface collapses, forming a pond.

When preliminary excavation work was done on the river bank a 'pot boiler' site was exposed; this consisted of dark soil containing calcined (burnt) flints which are grey/blue in colour with crazed cracks in them (see plan, fig. 1, and photo, fig. 2). A sample of this soil was taken from as deep as possible below the ground surface, yet just above the subsoil.

Unfortunately no pieces of carbon could be found, so it was uncertain whether this soil sample would be good enough to be radiocarbon dated, because the ancient organic matter could be gradually replaced by more recent organic matter. It was sent to the Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre for radiocarbon dating, and was good enough to date giving a result of 42 BC to AD 81, with a 95.4% probability of falling within this date range, and a 68.2% probability of dating to

between AD 3 and 67. Therefore this is at the end of the Iron Age and start of the Romano-British period.

Also noticed on the river bank was a hard black surface that the excavator bucket bounced over (see photo). Initially it was thought to be a kiln base, but further investigation found it to be a piece of ferruginous conglomerate – also known as pudding stone. This was formed in another geological process where water leeches through sand carrying iron to bond sand and gravel together where it meets clay and becomes trapped. It is noticeable that sand is to the west of the stream and clay to the east. Conglomerate was used as a building material in medieval times and it is often found in churches.

We will have to wait for the more exciting archaeological results to come out.



The Norwich and London Mail Coach, preserved at the Carriage Museum in Darley Dale, and a splendid reminder of Melanie Hilton's fascinating lecture on 27 October 2015. The number, 205, signifies the route and the 'GR' royal cipher refers to George IV. Melanie has written more than forty historical romances set in the Georgian and Regency periods under the pen name Louise Allen.

Spring Programme 2016

Lectures

All the following meetings are on Tuesdays in the Harbour Room at the British Legion Hall in the High Street, Blakeney starting at 7.30 pm. Entrance fees are £3.00 for members and £5.00 for visitors.

- 26 January** **Short Talks from members**
Diana Cooke 1586 – Heydon's Heraldry
Philip West Preston's of Holt, Photographers and Postcard Publishers
Morris Arthur Snitterley – What's in a Name?
- 23 February** **The Norfolks in WW1: insights gleaned from letters and diaries**
Kate Thaxton, Curator, Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum
- 29 March** **Anglo-Saxon East Anglia: new discoveries**
Tim Pestell
- 26 April** **"Not bad for a provincial museum": the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1816-2016**
Dr Lucilla Burn
- 27 September** **The True Poetry of World War 1: The Poets Time Forgot**
Dr Martin Stephen
- 25 October** **AGM followed by**
Money, Love and Status: a Paston Marriage
Susan Curran
-

History Centre Diary

History Centre Opening Times

December and January: Closed
February to November: Appointments must be booked in advance
April to October: First Tuesday in the month, 10.30am till 1pm
Additional Summer Openings: See Notice Board at Hall or visit our web site

Researchers and visitors wishing to use maps, large documents, film or fiche readers on a Tuesday morning are strongly advised to reserve a place in advance as both equipment and table space are very limited.

Appointments and reservations can be made by phone 01263 740388; by writing to the History Centre, Blakeney Village Hall, Langham Road, Blakeney, Norfolk NR25 7PG; by emailing "historycentre@history-blakeney-area.org.uk". Remember to state clearly the purpose of your visit, and include a SAE for confirmation if writing.

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