

BLAKENEY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter No. 9

September 2000

Dear Members,

In this Newsletter you have the usual summary of recent events and news of forthcoming ones, and also an invitation to the AGM on 19th September. Enclosed with this Newsletter are the AGM agenda, the minutes of the last AGM, and the report of your Management Committee for the year 1999/00. Several of the out-going Committee members are not standing for re-election and so new members will be needed. You have been warned!

Recent Events

The summer months tend to be a slack period for active fieldwork (too much vegetation for one thing) but these last three months have been anything but slack for those who have helped to prepare the two exhibitions held in Blakeney during July and the one planned for Wiveton during early September. The first exhibition, with the theme 'work in progress', was held in the Village Hall on 15th July. Boards illustrating many aspects of work at Blakeney Eye and at Wiveton filled the Hall. During the day some 250 people came in, many staying an hour, or even two, and a good many complimentary remarks were made. Such criticisms as were heard were mainly from Wiveton residents who asked why there were no plans for an exhibition there. Ever ready to oblige, your Committee subsequently agreed to put up a selection of boards in Wiveton church during the three days 7th – 9th September.

During the evening of 15th July Peter Carnell outlined the studies carried out at Bayfield church, the chapel on Blakeney Eye, and at Wiveton. He emphasised that much more could be done by acting as a group, pooling the skills and time of individual members to produce 'joined-up' conclusions.

On the Eye, the resistivity survey had been supplemented by a detailed contour survey, a magnetometer survey and molehill sampling. The latter had turned up fragments of slate, clearly old and almost certainly from Devon, which might well have been used to roof the chapel – though this is still a controversial suggestion. At Wiveton, near the church, the Society had undertaken one of the largest-ever resistivity surveys as well as studies of hedges, walls, the two bridges (yes, two), and prominent local families. The geophysical survey had produced some interesting patterns but, as always, the real fun is in interpreting the results – a manor site, perhaps? After some pertinent questions, Morris Arthur, on behalf of some 80 members and guests, proposed a vote of thanks for the lecture and for the work of the Society to date.

At the end of July, and to co-incide with the flower festival at all the local churches, the Society put on another exhibition at the Methodist chapel, with selected display boards from the Hall exhibition supplemented by the ever popular village scrapbooks. This too was well attended, with some 450 people coming in over the three days, including a number of visitors who had earlier family connections with the area.

The UEA Course

As you will know by now, another UEA course has been arranged for this autumn. The tutor is Gerald Randall, and the subject is the **History and Architecture of the English Parish Church**. Gerald has said that as far as possible he will use examples from East Anglia. The course will be held on Monday afternoons, 2.00 to 4.00 pm, in the Chapel, starting on 25th September. A sheet with lecture dates and titles, and other information, is available from the Secretary. Please come if you can, it looks to be a most interesting course (and anyway, the Society gains financially in proportion to the number who attend). It would be useful if those who intend coming could let John Wright know beforehand, but this is not essential: just turn up on the day, there is plenty of room in the Chapel.

The Glaven Historian

Just a reminder that further copies of all three issues of *The Glaven Historian* can be supplied by the Editor at a cost of £5 each, although when original print runs sell out good quality photocopies will be supplied instead.

Subscriptions

The Society's membership year ended on 30th June and new subscriptions (£8) were payable on 1st July. About half of the membership has so far renewed, and we do hope that the other half will do so soon. A receipt book will be available at the AGM ...

FUTURE PROGRAMME

The next event is the exhibition at Wiveton for those who missed the earlier ones or who wish to take a longer look at some of the exhibits. The exhibition will be in the church, and will be open from 10.0 am to 4.0 pm. The talk after the AGM will be by David White, Woodland Officer with North Norfolk District Council, who will talk about the landscape history of the area which now comprises Holt Country Park. Then come the four 'clubnights' during the winter.

7th – 9th September **Exhibition**

A 3 day exhibition of the Society's recent work concentrating on a variety of studies based on Wiveton will be held in Wiveton church. Opening hours will be from 10.0 am to 4.0 pm, or thereabouts, and there will always be a Project member in attendance. No talks will be given though.

19th September **AGM**

Papers are enclosed with this Newsletter and you are urged to bring them to the meeting as there will not be many duplicate sets there. The speaker after the formal business will be **David White** who will talk about the history of the area that is now Holt Country Park.

Clubnights

All clubnights have been well attended but there is always room in the Chapel for a few more. Do come along: meetings are free to members and their guests, and coffee is provided.

All club nights are on Tuesdays and start at 7.30 pm.

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| 31 st October | 2000 | Bricks in the brambles | David Durst will tell us about the industrial archaeology of north Norfolk – yes, we do have some, mills and brick works etc. |
| 28 th November | 2000 | Wiveton again | but you haven't seen this one before!
Peter Carnell will talk about the findings of the Wiveton work to date, this time with full illustrations: aerial photos, computer maps, 3D images etc, plus (he says) some impressive if controversial interpretations of the geophysical results. |
| 27 th February | 2001 | Village memories | Philip West from Hindringham has a slide show for us: north Norfolk from 1875. |
| 27 th March | 2001 | Journey along the A149 | Gerald Cubitt , back again by popular request, will show another selection from his collection of local postcards, this time covering the area from Hunstanton to Weybourne as seen during the first half of the 1900s. |
- Gerald and Philip are well known to each other so there won't be inadvertent duplication.

Archaeology at Gressenhall

Many of you will know something of the work of the former Norfolk Archaeological Unit – sometimes just known as 'Gressenhall' (ignoring possible confusion with the Rural Life Museum which is also housed in the old Union House at Gressenhall). Yes, but it isn't called the Unit any more – and hasn't been for some time. The latest Newsletter from the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeology Society explains the various changes which have taken place most recently. Starting at the top there is a department known as Cultural Services, of which one part is the 'Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service' whose head is Vanessa Trevelyan. Under her is a management team whose members include Brian Ayers (Archaeology and Environment), John Davies (Chief Curator) and Martin Warren (Collection Management). Brian speaks regularly on Radio Norfolk and Martin used to be at Cromer Museum.

Archaeology and Environment is the new name for the former Field Archaeology Division which still comprises the same two sections: Norfolk Landscape Archaeology and the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (in its current form). The Unit is engaged in practical archaeology and has offices in Norwich. Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (the section which is housed at Gressenhall) has been restructured and there have been some staff changes as a result. David Gurney continues to head the section and Edwin Rose and Andy Hutchinson are the Development Control officers.

Andrew Rogerson continues as Senior Field Archaeologist with responsibility for 'outreach'. Jan Allen is now the Records Officer with responsibility for both the Sites and Monuments Record and the Air Photographs Library (Derek Edwards has retired). There are also three staff members who provide an identification and recording service. Got that?

Thoughts on Flint Quoins (by Monica White)

The most common local building material is flint and it has been used, certainly since the late Saxon period, to build churches, dwellings and farm buildings. But almost all of these buildings contain other materials. The rectangular church buildings have quoins of worked stone, many houses and farm buildings have brick quoins and early medieval houses (before the 14th century) were almost certainly timber-framed – flint being used in place of wattle and daub. Examples of such houses can be seen today in Walsingham, although the flint infilling is post-medieval. Almost the only exceptions were round towers which are constructed almost entirely of flint) although even these usually contain one or two courses of stone or tiles). It has been suggested that the towers are round because of the difficulty of building right-angled corners without stone or brick. But recently I visited the church of All Saints at Barmer, about four miles SE of Docketing. In this church the nave is built solely of flint, much of it knapped, with great cut flints acting as quoins. W.J. Goode (*Round Tower Churches of SE England*) argues that the nave is therefore Saxon – though I do not know whether his claim is true.

It is clearly possible, therefore, to build square or rectangular buildings from flint and one can only surmise why it is that Norman and later medieval churches and houses used stone or brick quoins. It could be that Saxon builders were more skilful than their Norman counterparts, as claimed by Goode. It could be that larger buildings – Barmer church is relatively small - are more stable if stone quoins are used. Or it could be that fashion or status demanded the use of stone, a rare and expensive material in Norfolk. But whatever the truth of these suggestions, it is very well worth visiting the church, now maintained by the Norfolk Churches Trust, to look at the flint work and admire the precision with which the flints were used.

Books

Monica's piece was written before the recent publication of a book entitled *Flint Architecture of East Anglia* by Stephen Hart, a paperback of 150 pages from Giles de la Mare Publishers (no price stated but can be bought for £20, less a penny). There is good description of the many different styles of flintwork and over a hundred colour illustrations of flint details. There is a section on quoins and plenty of reference to round towers. No, I haven't read it yet but it does contain the sentence 'This shows that the capacity to construct square corners in local materials existed before the building of round towers.'

AND FINALLY As usual, any comments, requests, suggestions, corrections etc should be made known to any member of the Management Committee or to the Secretary and Editor: John Wright (01263 740589).