

BAHS Digital Newsletter Issue 3 21 November 2020 www.bahs.uk

Welcome

Welcome to the third digital newsletter of the Blakeney Area Historical Society.

This newsletter is being sent to all current and past members plus individuals who have signed up to our information emails. If you would rather not receive the newsletter you may unsubscribe using the link at the end of the newsletter.

In this newsletter, along we much else, we have the lecture programme including the first part of 2021; Part 1 of John Peake's The 'Hettie' Lifeboat and the Lifeboat Houses: A Personal Odyssey; John Wright provides information on Robert Pearson Brereton and two other prominent civil engineers from the same family. Also, Margaret Bird has kindly provided background on the recent gift to the History Centre of a photocopy of the Mary Hardy diary and more.

Finally, before you settle down to read the newsletter, please note that any information contained in the newsletter is copyright of the author and is published as provided and with their permission. Despite best efforts the occasional mistake may slip through. If so, please blame the editor not the contributors.

2020 & 2021 Lectures

The option of holding a socially distanced meeting is not currently possible as meeting rooms and village halls remain closed. As a result the society continues to arrange digital Zoom meetings. Thanks go to the speakers who have agreed to provide their lectures over Zoom.

Tuesday 24 November, 7.30 pm on Zoom

Dereham and its vicar in Victorian Times.

Susanna Wade-Martins

December

No meeting.

Tuesday 26th January 2021

The Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn Project—Principles and Processes

Dr Agata Gomolka, Project Assistant Curator, Norwich Castle

Tuesday 23rd February 2021

Eighteenth-century East Anglian Antiquaries

Dr Lucilla Burn

Tuesday 30th March 2021

The Grand Tour & Beyond

Victoria Draper, Norfolk Record Office

Tuesday 27th April2021

Travels in the footsteps of James Baillie Fraser

Dr Ben Cartwright

Arrangements

The Zoom invite will be provided by email shortly before any talk. General details and guidelines on using Zoom may be found on the Society website at www.bahs.uk/activities/events/venues/zoom-meetings/

Further Details

Please visit www.bahs.uk/activities/events/planned-events for further information.

Recorded Lectures

The last two lectures were recorded and may be viewed by visiting:

www.bahs.uk/activities/events/lecture-recordings/

The 'Hettie' Lifeboat and the Lifeboat Houses: A Personal Odyssey

As I was reading John Wright's interesting article on the Blakeney Lifeboat Station in the recent *Glaven Historian* I couldn't stop memories flooding back. Although they started with the first time I heard of the '*Hettie*' lifeboat, my mind rapidly wandered to earlier thoughts of seeing the iconic lifeboat buildings over 70 years ago, just after WW2 when I first visited the Point as a schoolboy, then coming back to camp there as an university student. However, my strongest memories are living by myself in the old laboratory during one winter when employed as a Research Officer by the National Trust, cooking my own meals on a primus stove and watching birds in the tamarisk bushes just outside the window, only to realise Richard Richardson was on the other side also watching. In those days the harbour was far from empty, there would be fishermen working their mussel lays, bait-diggers scattered around or Stratton Long charging out to sea in a converted lifeboat to recover targets shot down by gunnery fire from the army camps.



Figure 1: Hettie Lifeboat viewed from bow to stern

Returning to the 'Hettie', the story starts one evening when a rather vague phone call announced the existence of a model of a Blakeney Lifeboat that the owner wanted to donate to Blakeney. The National Trust had been approached, but they were not interested and the woman on the other end of the phone sounded desperate. It was quickly established that the model was in Folkestone and it was in a glass case, moreover it was large, about three foot long. A most unlikely candidate for my interest having spent years in a museum being offered unwanted gifts from unknown parts of the world, but then a crucial fact emerged, the model was named 'Hettie'. My wife, Pam, who had been collecting information on Blakeney lifeboats for many years, recognised the name. So, we succumbed to the temptation and the result of our decision to drive to Folkestone now sits in a new case in St Nicholas Church.

We met the old lady who was making the gift, loaded the model onto the back seat of the car and then started looking for a supply of cardboard boxes to cushion the case plus model during the journey home. There was an opportunity to make a detour to see the Lifeboat Museum at Chatham Dockyard and this made us realise the quality of the gift – a rare 'Presentation Model'. Now all we had to do was fulfil the promises we had made to a very sick lady who was to die in less than a week. It was her grandfather who had donated money to the RNLI for the purchase of a lifeboat, but there is no evidence he had any connection with Blakeney. The name 'Hettie' was probably derived from the name of his first wife who had only recently died.

The rest of the journey home was spent discussing where the model could be displayed in the village and how we would raise the money to buy a secure display case. Quite a challenge, nevertheless, we felt elated, the 'Hettie' was coming home to Blakeney and could sit in our house while we collected our thoughts. Once the Church agreed to provide a home we were on our way and here I must thank Chris Wheeler for all the help he provided at this stage. Some may remember an exhibition in the Church that quickly followed called 'Ships Ahoy', this was organised to raise money for the case and show 'Hettie' to a wider audience. The model was then transferred to the History Centre and placed in their care

Since then the 'Hettie' has been the stimulus for further research by both Pam and myself often trying to answer quite simple questions. Here are three which although not earth-shattering do provide an insight into the operation of the lifeboat service.

- Why were the oars painted blue and white?
- What was the colour of the hull of early lifeboats?
- Who made the model?



Figure 2: Hettie Lifeboat viewed from above

Colour of Oars

The photographs of the model show an array of gear in the hull including oars, spars, two masts and sails. This corresponds closely with an inventory for a similar model of a 'pulling and sailing lifeboat' held in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, suggesting this is a full complement of gear. Conspicuous are the twelve blue and white oars, six for each side, and this immediately raises the question - why were they painted different colours? A quick look at two photographs in the *Glaven Historian*, one of the 'Caroline' taken by Olive Edis in 1918, the other of the 'Brightwell' which was much earlier, both show white oars on the starboard side of the boats. Fortunately Pam had an early newspaper cutting of the Cromer lifeboat which although it is only black and white shows dark and light blades to the oars and recently a post on the internet shows this pattern existed in the 1950's on the last 'pulling and sailing lifeboat' in Britain stationed at Whitby.

There was a reason for this pattern. Early in the 19th century the terms referring to the different sides of a boat were starboard on the right side when looking forward to the bow, with larboard on the left. Larboard was the old term for what we now call port, the change occurred during the 19th century with, for example, the Royal Navy ordering that port be used exclusively after 1844. If, like me, you are slightly sceptical that this would apply to lifeboats, then look carefully at the model in the Church and see that the seating positions on the port side are labelled L1 – L6, with starboard S1 – S6. So, the suggestion is that it would have been clearer for the coxswain to call for either blue or white oars to pull rather than the alternative starboard or larboard.



Figure 3: Hettie Lifeboat viewed from the side

Colour of Hull

The next question is slightly more problematical. The lower part of the hull on the model of the 'Hettie' is dark blue, the colour we associate with lifeboats today, but one correspondent suggested that this was not always the case and many earlier lifeboats were light blue! In the course of trying to get my head around this conundrum there were discussions with some of the volunteers at Sheringham Museum, where one was painting murals on the seawalls. The problem was what colour should he paint an early lifeboat. Looking at photographs confirmed the hulls of many early lifeboats, at least in this part of the world, were light coloured. Look at the example of the 'Brightwell' in the Glaven Historian. The reason light blue was abandoned could be the difficulty of picking out a light-coloured object at a long distance in a shimmering sea.

Makers of model

Curiosity drove me to think more about who made such a superb model. Enquiries at the RNLI provided no enlightenment, nor the National Maritime Museum nor the Science Museum, who hold an acclaimed collection of model boats. Fortunately the model had an anomaly that enabled the question to be approached in a different way - the insignia on the bow of the model is that of the National Lifeboat Institute, which can also be seen on the photograph of the 'Brightwell', but this insignia was obsolete by the time the 'Hettie' was launched in 1873. The RNLI had received the right to use 'Royal' in 1860, surely they would not have been party to such a mistake. Indeed the inscription on the silver dedication plaque attached to the plinth uses the 'Royal' epithet suggesting at least two separate organisations were involved. At this stage the quest for answers was widened.

In the second half of the 19th century and into the 20th new inventions and designs for life-saving equipment, including boats, were appearing regularly in the *London Gazette* and at international exhibitions. While ship building along the Thames expanded enormously with two competing firms winning contracts from the NLI or RNLI to build over 200 lifeboats: these were Forrest & Son of Limehouse and Woolfe & Son of Shadwell, the latter built the '*Hettie*'. Amongst this milieu of boat building and exhibitions there would have been opportunities for specialised model-makers to exist producing presentation gifts for appropriate dignitaries or sponsors and it would not be unreasonable to presume one of these made the '*Hettie*' model.

Lifeboat Houses

When the 'Hettie' arrived at Blakeney in 1873 she was housed in the old black Lifeboat House continued in the next newsletter.

John Peake, BAHS Honorary Member

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Two years ago the Society was asked for information about someone who became Brunel's chief assistant and who took charge after Brunel's death. This associate of Brunel was also the subject of a recent enquiry from the Tamar Bridge Centre, an organization looking for information about the construction of the Royal Albert Bridge over the River Tamar which separates Plymouth in Devon from Saltash in Cornwall.

This 'someone' came from a family with property in a number of Norfolk villages and who produced no fewer than three prominent civil engineers. Readers familiar with Blakeney church will know of the brass plaque on the south wall of the nave. That and a ledger slab in the churchyard both carry the name of **Robert Pearson Brereton**. He was born in Blakeney on 4th April 1818 and was baptised there the following day. His parents were Robert John Brereton and Sarah whose maiden name was Sarah Pearson Walton. It was common in the Brereton family, as in many others, for a mother's surname to be used later as a forename.

As a merchant living in the Red House, Robert John Brereton was an influential resident of Blakeney. Randle Brereton, a corn merchant who lived in the Merchant House off Blakeney High St, was one of his cousins. When the Blakeney Harbour Company was formed in 1817 two of the five directors were Robert John Brereton and his father Robert.

The young Robert Pearson Brereton (RPB) was taken on to Brunel's staff in 1836 as one of seven engineers supervising the building of the Great Western Railway. When that was completed he transferred to other railways that Brunel was building, including the Cheltenham and Great Western Union Railway. Later he was sent to Italy to resolve problems with the Turin to Genoa railway. While still in his twenties he became Brunel's chief assistant and remained so until Brunel's death in September 1859.

One of Brunel's long-running projects was the construction of the Royal Albert Bridge over the Tamar to carry the Cornwall railway. In 1854 RPB was sent to assist the resident engineer on what was a difficult project, and he subsequently supervised the raising of the first span some 100 ft to the top of the piers. When Brunel's poor health prevented him from working on the bridge, RPB took over the project and completed it in May 1859. Thereafter he took over Brunel's work as chief engineer for many railway companies, designing new works and alterations. He ran his business from Brunel's old office in London, with Brunel's widow, Mary, living in the rooms above.

Brunel had described RPB as 'a peculiarly energetic persevering young man' and another tribute read 'always ready, always able, always full of energy'. He lost an eye in an explosion while working on the Great Western Railway and a portrait of him with Brunel in a mural in the SS Great Britain shows RPB wearing a black eyepatch.

At the time of the 1861 census he was living in Marylebone with his wife, his sister and one of her sons. In 1842 RPB had married Anna Margaretta Brereton, his second cousin; they had no children. His sister Elizabeth Ann had married Anna's brother, John Brereton. Their children included John Lloyd Brereton who at the time of the 1851 census was in Blakeney with his grandparents Robert and Sarah.

The son who had the good fortune to be living with Uncle Robert was Cuthbert Arthur, then ten years old. He was also to become a prominent civil engineer. He had been born in Brinton, his father John being a brewer and seed merchant. **Cuthbert Arthur Brereton** was educated at Clifton College and was placed as a pupil with RPB. In 1872 he was appointed engineer to the Llynvi and Ogmore Railways and the Porthcawl Docks; later he worked at Waterford in Ireland, and on other projects including the Inner Circle Railway. For some time he was in partnership with Sir John Wolfe Barry, working on the construction of docks at Barry, Middlesbrough and elsewhere, on the new bridge at Kew, and on many other projects. Just before his death he had been elected Vice President of the Institute of Civil Engineering.

The family tree (below) has been taken from the extensive Brereton pedigree set out in Norfolk Genealogy (Vol 6) without further research, apart from checking

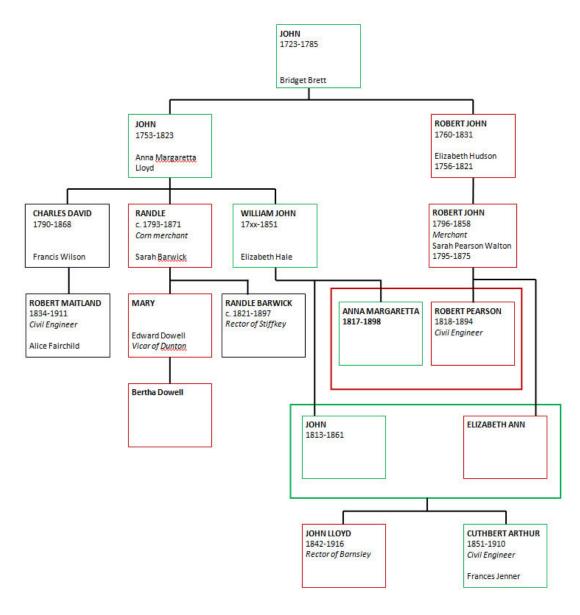
that it tallies with the 1851 census records for Blakeney. The tree is highly condensed to show just the relationship between the three engineers (*one more still to come*) and those members of the family associated with Blakeney (outlined in red). The principal residence of this section of the Brereton clan was Brinton Hall, which had been rebuilt by them in 1822 and remained in the family, passed down to eldest sons, until it was sold by Cuthbert's son. The families at Brinton are outlined in green. Some references to the early members of the family can be found in Mary Hardy's diary, so ably presented by Margaret Bird in her eight substantial volumes. Mary Hardy's spelling was usually 'Breerton' following the local pronunciation. John Brereton, uncle of the first John shown on the tree, was the initial maltster, brewer and miller at Letheringsett, the business subsequently acquired by William Hardy.

Robert Maitland Brereton had a more illustrious career than either RPB or Cuthbert, and this short note cannot do justice to it. Born in Little Massingham, where his father was Rector, he was nephew to Randle Brereton, corn merchant in Blakeney, and cousin to Randle, Rector of Stiffkey. After studying at King's College, London, he joined Brunel's team and also worked on the Tamar bridge. In 1857 he went to India, started work on the Bombay to Calcutta railway, and eventually became chief engineer for the Great Indian Peninsular Railway, completing the connection across the sub-continent in 1870 – ahead of schedule. He was then called to work in California on various irrigation schemes and other projects. He returned to Norfolk for a while, as County Surveyor of roads and bridges, then went back to work in the USA and died in Oregon in 1911.

Robert Pearson Brereton died in Paddington and his body was brought back to Blakeney for burial in September 1894. His ledger slab, close by the chancel, also commemorates Anna Margaretta his wife (1817-1898). It is one of three for the family which cover a vault in which five other family members lie. They include RPB's father Robert and his mother Sarah, who died in 1875 aged 80. His grandfather Robert (1759-1831) also lies there. The full text on the two earlier stones, on one of which heraldic arms are incised, is included in Walton Dew's list of the monumental inscriptions of Holt Hundred.

RPB probably spent little time in Blakeney during his working life but in view of his family's close association with this village it is no surprise that he chose to come back to the place of his birth.

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NOTES

- The surname Brereton should follow every name shown in capitals.
- The tree is complicated by the need to show that siblings John and Anna Margaretta married their second cousins Elizabeth and Robert Pearson Brereton.
- Green boxes denote ownership of Brinton Hall.
- Red boxes show who lived in Blakeney or who were there at the 1851 census.

John Wright

Mary Hardy comes to the History Centre

A full set of photocopies of the 500,000-word manuscript diary of Mary Hardy (1733–1809) was deposited in the History Centre at Blakeney on 23 October 2020. This gift will complete the Centre's holdings on the Norfolk diarist who wrote her daily record beside the River Glaven at Letheringsett Hall from 1781 until her death.

The provenance of the photocopies

Margaret Bird made the set of A3 photocopies early in 1989 at her Kingston upon Thames home. This was at the start of her work on Mary Hardy later published as *The Diary of Mary Hardy 1773–1809* (4 volumes, Burnham Press, 2013), *The Remaining Diary of Mary Hardy* (Burnham Press, 2013) and *Mary Hardy and her World 1773–1809* (4 volumes, Burnham Press, 2020).

The then custodian of the manuscript, the Hon. Beryl Cozens-Hardy (1911–2011), doubly descended from Mary Hardy, gave permission for Margaret to make three sets of photocopies. The Norfolk Record Office holds one set, deposited by Margaret with the descendants' permission in 2013 (NRO: FX 376).

Margaret holds the second set as her working copies. She thus did not have to rely on the original diary during her 32-year project.

The deposit by Caroline Holland

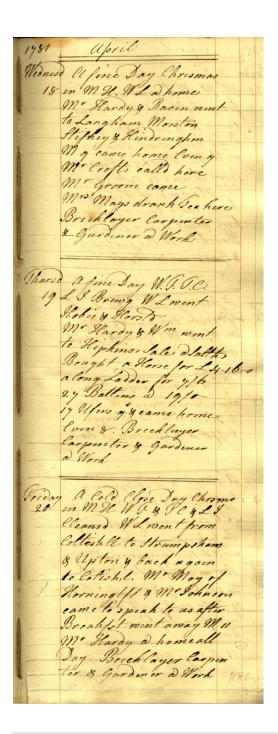
In April 1989 Margaret Bird gave the third set to Beryl for safe keeping when she handed back the precious diary. Beryl then gave those copies in 1997 to Caroline Holland, another descendant of the diarist, whose Norfolk base is at Little Thornage near Holt. Caroline, a new BAHS member and granddaughter of the prolific Norfolk historian Basil Cozens-Hardy (1885–1976), has now very kindly deposited the photocopies in the History Centre for local public access.

The Centre already holds the deposits made in recent years by David Mayes, who served the Cozens-Hardy family as gardener at Letheringsett Hall 1956–78 and the Hall estate 1956–98; he continued to serve as Beryl's gardener at The Glebe, near the Hall, until 2004. David's own records on the gardens, waterways, the village and Cozens-Hardy family history form an invaluable archive in their own right.

Click here for the news item from 2013 which gives additional information about the diary photocopies.

STOP PRESS, 31 October 2020

Two volumes of *Mary Hardy and her World* made it to the shortlist, in separate categories, for the East Anglian Book Awards; unfortunately they did not go on to win. More than 100 titles were submitted for the awards this year.



Mary Hardy's entries for 18, 19 and 20 April 1781, made shortly after the family's move to Letheringsett from Coltishall, on the Broads. Once the diarist's contractions are mastered the text is easy to read. She used five huge counting-house ledgers during the 36 years of her diary-keeping: hence the need for A3 photocopying.

Near the top of the page her husband and elder son Raven (aged 13) tour some local tied houses to meet the innkeepers. These include Langham (the Bell), Morston (the Chequers, later the Anchor) and Stiffkey (the Red Lion): William Hardy was a farmer, maltster and brewer. The next day he and his younger son William (aged 11) bought a horse and a long ladder at a Salthouse sale following the bankruptcy of William Hipkins (d.1788), a Cley merchant [Cozens-Hardy Collection]

Glaven Historian Online

Glaven Historian's Issue 7 (2004) and Issue 9 (2006) are now available online for anyone to view. This means Glaven Historian Issues 1 to 9 are now available to view by anyone visiting the website.

Glaven Historian's Issue 15 (2017) is now available online for current members to view. This means Glaven Historian Issues 10 to 15 are now available to view by current members.

Glaven Historian Issues 16 & 17 are not available online.

For details on the different issues of the Glaven Historian please visit www.bahs.uk/publications/glaven-historian/

Like a hard copy? Please contact Jan Semple who manages publication sales for information on purchasing current or past issues of the Glaven Historian at sales@bahs.uk. Current members receive a preferential rate.

Chalk Rivers & The River Glaven

The River Glaven is one of the important chalk-fed rivers in Norfolk. Click here to visit the Norfolk Rivers Trust and information about the River Glaven.

One of our members, Peter Wordingham, has suggested that members might enjoy the video on the same website of the chalk streams of Norfolk narrated by Stephen Fry. Click here for the video.

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On This Day

Listed below are a few of the events that happened on November 21st.

1783 First Untethered Balloon Flight

The marquis d' Arlandes François Laurent and the French physician Jean-François Pilatre de Rozier made the first untethered hot-air balloon flight over Paris, covering over 5 miles in about 25 minutes. Their cloth balloon was invented and made by the Montgolfier brothers.

1877 The phonograph was invented

Thomas Edison announced his invention of the phonograph - a way to record and play back sound. Whilst working over several months at his laboratory in New Jersey on a way to record and play back telephone communication he invented the phonograph which was patented on this day.

1916 Sister ship to the Titanic, the Britannic, sank in the Aegean Sea

Following the sinking in 1912 of the Titanic, the White Star Line made several changes to the design of the Britannic including its name which originally was going to be Gigantic. On this day an explosion caused the ship to sink in under one hour. More than 1,000 people were rescued but, sadly, 30 were killed.

1920 Bloody Sunday, Dublin

During the Irish war of Independence more than 30 people were killed or fatally wounded on November 21st. IRA members went to a number of locations and killed or fatally wounded 15 men. Later that day, British RIC officers, known as the 'Black and Tans' and others raided a Gaelic football match at Croke Park. Without warning they opened fire on the spectators and players killing or fatally wounding 14 people and wounding many more.

1974 Birmingham Pub Bombings

21 people were killed when bombs exploded at two pubs in Birmingham, England. It was the deadliest attack in England during the period known as "the Troubles".

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Tips & Tricks: Keyboard Shortcuts

This column of the newsletter whilst not about historical matters will offer tips and tricks that may help in improving your use of your computer and the Internet in general including for historical research.

Who knows, but the few minutes spent reading this column may save you enough time in the future to read these newsletters or make your house history research less of a chore.

Keyboard shortcuts can be very useful. These are normally possible from most Windows or Apple Mac programs/apps. Just remembering a few keyboard shortcuts may speed things up immeasurably.

Looking for some specific text?

Most programmes have a Find option but it may be buried just about anywhere in the menus. On Windows using Ctrl-f (hold down the Ctrl key and the f key at the same time) will bring up the search dialogue. This works in browsers, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint and most other programmes.

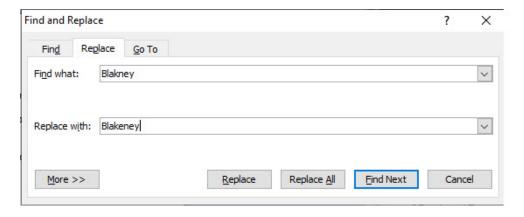
If working on an Apple Mac use the Cmd (Command) key as in Cmd-f

Note: The Ctrl or Cmd key should be pressed down immediately before pressing down the **f** key - which is true for all these keyboard shortcuts.

Want to replace text?

In, for example, Microsoft Word you may want to replace some text throughout the document. On Windows using Ctrl-h (hold down the Ctrl key and the h key at the same time) will open the Find and Replace dialogue. Then you can find each occurrence of the text and choose to replace it or even do replace all.

If working on an Apple Mac use the Cmd (Command) key as in Cmd-h



Note: if you are making extensive changes then it may be best to save the document first so you may go back to it if need be.

Want to save your document?

In, for example, Microsoft Word you may want to save your document just before doing some text replacement or major formatting changes. On Windows using Ctrl-s (hold down the Ctrl key and the s key at the same time) will save the document. It's a lot faster than going through the menus to find Save.

If working on an Apple Mac use the Cmd (Command) key as in Cmd-s

Want to Print your document?

In, for example, Microsoft Word on Windows using Ctrl-p (hold down the Ctrl key and the p key at the same time) will open the print dialogue. Again it's a lot faster than going through the menus to find Print.

If working on an Apple Mac use the Cmd (Command) key as in Cmd-p

Other Shortcuts

There are many more shortcuts available. Just do a search of keyboard shortcuts windows or keyboard shortcuts mac to find more.

Richard Daley

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Non-BAHS Activities

GYLHAS Talks

The Great Yarmouth Local History and Archaeological Society (GYLHAS) has been in contact to ask if they may use Roger Bland's talk in their programme. This was agreed to by both Roger and the BAHS. The GYLHAS have some online talks and are happy to share them. Please follow the link below to discover the talks available and to register.

Read more...

BALH Talks

The society is a member of the British Association for Local History. The BALH has published a range of free ten-minute local history talks.

Read more...

Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society

The society is a member of the Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society. The NNAS has moved its lectures online.

Read more...

Norfolk Record Office

The Norfolk Record office has announced some online history talks.

Read more...

Joining BAHS

If you are not a member and wish to join you may join online or download our membership form from the BAHS website.

Click here to join.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due from 1st September for the year 2020/21.

Membership rates are unchanged at:

- Individual £12
- Family £18
- Corporate £25

Renewals & Standing Orders

Over twenty members have renewed their subscription using standing orders and others have paid online using faster payments.

If you can pay this way it helps as it creates less work for the membership secretary & treasurer. It also means less time standing in queues at the bank which, particularly in the current situation, is much appreciated by the treasurer.

If you are planning to renew, details may be found by clicking here.

Information Emails

If you receive this newsletter then you are receiving information emails.

Members automatically receive information emails. Non-members may receive information emails by signing-up.

Information Emails sign-up

Helping the BAHS

The BAHS Committee has many things that it would like help with and you don't have to serve on the committee to be involved!

There are plenty of areas where help would be welcome. One particular one is providing short reviews of Society lectures. Frank Hawes used to provide a short review on Society lectures for the Glaven Valley Newsletter_and the committee were very appreciative of this help. If these reviews were restarted they would be published in this newsletter as well as the Glaven Valley Newsletter.

If anyone would be interested in taking this over or help in some other way then please get in contact be emailing info@bahs.uk.

History Centre

The History Centre is a small confined area and remains closed during the pandemic. This will be reviewed by the committee as and when Government guidelines change.

BAHS Committee

Chairman: Richard Kelham [Temporary] chair@bahs.uk

Secretary: Diana Cooke secretary-bahs@bahs.uk

History Centre: historycentre@bahs.uk

History Centre Records: John Wright <u>john.wright@bahs.uk</u>

Membership Secretary: Bridget Candy <u>membership@bahs.uk</u>

Publications: Roger Bland <u>publications@bahs.uk</u>

Treasurer: Richard Daley treasurer@bahs.uk

Lecture Programme Manager: Roger Bland [Temporary]

lecture.programme@bahs.uk

Sales Organiser: Jan Semple sales@bahs.uk

Website Organiser: Richard Daley webmaster@bahs.uk

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