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# THE GLAVEN HISTORIAN

*The Journal of the Blakeney Area Historical Society*

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## **Contents**

Editorial		2
Jonathan Hooton	<i>“Minstrel” Biography of a Sailing Ship</i>	3
Ronald Beresford Dew	<i>Kenneth Ernest William Allen 1909-1992 An appreciation</i>	12
Pamela Peake	<i>Innkeepers and Blacksmiths of Blakeney The Allen Connection</i>	17
John White	<i>Some Historically Significant Trees in Norfolk</i>	32
Richard Jefferson	<i>“Lest We Forget” HMS Princess Victoria and War Graves in North Norfolk Churchyards</i>	47
John Peake	<i>A Snapshot of Blakeney Haven in 1565</i>	58
D J B White	<i>Blakeney Point and University College London</i>	68
Back Pages	<i>Work in Progress; Snippets</i>	74

# Editorial

Welcome to issue 8 of *The Glaven Historian*. No archaeology in this issue – which might come as a relief to some of you – but a distinctly *natural* history flavour to a couple of pieces; John White is a well-known dendrologist who has used his skills to demonstrate just how ancient some of our trees are – and that is just the ones that are still standing, still growing. The related discipline of dendrochronology has been of tremendous value in calibrating radio-carbon dating technology, thereby greatly increasing its precision. By the use of these techniques it is possible to date the, still living, great Bayfield Oak to 1346, and from that to surmise that it was in all probability self-seeded at a time when the human occupants of the area were rather too preoccupied with the Black Death to worry about oak saplings appearing in their midst.

Other flora (and fauna) in the Glaven Valley have long attracted attention, both academic and mercenary. An example of the former is the laboratory set up at Blakeney Point by Professor F W Oliver on behalf of the Botany Department of University College, London, as recounted by Dr Donald White.

We return to our familiar maritime theme with Jonathan Hooton's portrait of the schooner *Minstrel*. Though no doubt the mariners of the day cursed it as red tape (the expression existed in the 19th century having been coined by Dickens, and popularised by Carlyle) the improvements to official record-keeping through the Victorian period has made the life of maritime historians much easier, as has the invention of photography. All these resources have been brought to bear on the creation of this "biography".

One of the cornerstones of local history research in the Glaven Valley is the amazing collection of notes and transcriptions gathered together by the late Kenneth Allen who is remembered in this issue in an appreciation written by his old friend Ronald Beresford Dew. The Allen collection is in the Norfolk Record Office, but, thanks to the generosity of Professor Dew, a duplicate set has been lodged in the History Centre, Blakeney.

Pamela Peake has complemented the Allen Appreciation by delving into the history of the family in Blakeney. Arriving in the middle of the 19th century, the Allen family seemed to spe-

cialise in Innkeeping and Blacksmithing. Pamela Peake puts the Allen family into its context among the other innkeepers and blacksmiths who served the community into the 20th century.

Often a very small and seemingly insignificant find can lead to a much wider investigation. Richard Jefferson was sufficiently intrigued by his accidental "discovery" of the graves of three servicemen, washed up on the beach near Cley within days of each other in June 1940, to delve into where they had come from and how they came to be there. His investigations led him to the reports of the sinking of the HMS *Princess Victoria* a month earlier, the graves of other crew members along the North Norfolk coast, and eventually to contact with two survivors of the sinking. It also seems that, in the fog of war, identification of bodies washed ashore was not quite as scrupulous as it might be today.

John Peake, likewise intrigued by the 15th-16th century graffiti of ships to be found – if you are sufficiently diligent – in several local churches, has used a survey of 1565 as the basis for a look at the life of the Haven and its people in the 16th century. This 1565 Survey is a quite remarkably detailed document which, together with other surviving documents such as with Wills and Inventories, enables the local historian to build up a good impression of the economic life of our forebears 450 years ago.

The Back Pages have expanded slightly to accommodate a work in progress, the survey of Cockthorpe church. Frank Hawes and Pamela Peake are arranging for a group of BAHS members to make a survey of All Saints, a delightful, if redundant, local church. It is small enough for this not to be a lifetime's work (we hope) but varied enough to sustain interest. The project will look at more than just the fabric of building but has started with a Survey of the structure. The monumental inscriptions have also been recorded – more next time.

A topical note, given the recent General Election, is struck by Monica White who has dug up a report of how election campaigns were conducted locally almost a hundred years before the first Great Reform Act. The hustings in Holt must have been not unlike those depicted so graphically by William Hogarth, and in Thomas Love Peacock's *Melincourt* – our parliamentary democracy has come a long way since then, but, many would argue, still has a long way to go.

# **Minstrel**

## **Biography of a Sailing Ship**

*by Jonathan Hooton*

*Synopsis: The Minstrel traded during the second half of the 19th century and into the next, visiting Blakeney and other ports along the North Norfolk coast. Here the wealth of information about the schooner is reviewed, from voyages along the coast and overseas to the people who built, owned and sailed her.*

Among the photographs of Blakeney quay that survive from the end of the 19th century, there are several that include the topsail schooner *Minstrel*. In addition a photograph of a ship painting of her and a two dimensional image of her being constructed also survive. The existence of a good photographic record, plus the fact that she traded from all of the North Norfolk ports for more than 50 years made the *Minstrel* a suitable subject for further research.

She was built at Wells and although in the 1840s and 50s, there was a trend to invest in bigger vessels, intended for the deep-sea trade, the majority of vessels built were sloops and schooners of between 50 and 100 tons. The *Minstrel* was typically one of these vessels that formed the backbone of the trade of Wells. Built in 1847, she was able to partake in the height of the 19th century trade, and, lasting until 1904, she also saw the decline.

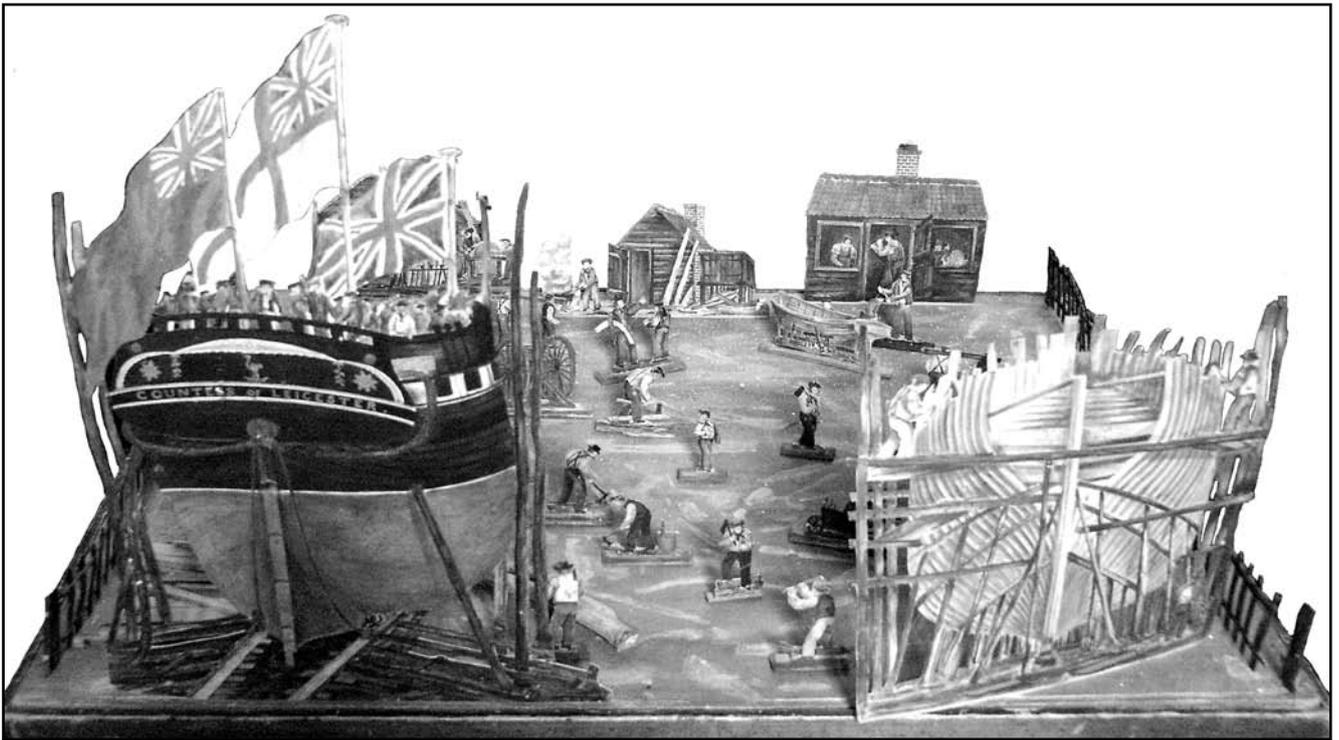
### **Early History**

There were two shipyards in Wells at that time, John Lubbock's and Henry Tyrrell's and the *Minstrel* was built at the latter's yard at the East End, just past Jolly Sailor's Yard. The launch was recorded by the Norfolk Chronicle, which stated "Yesterday afternoon (25th August) at six o'clock, a very pretty schooner called the *Minstrel* was launched from Mr H T Tyrrell's shipyard. She is the property of T T Mack Esq. of Burnham."<sup>1</sup> A few months earlier, in April 1847, Tyrrell had launched the *Countess of Leicester*, the largest vessel to be built at Wells to that date and described as "a splendid brig" and "the finest specimen of shipbuilding ever constructed at Wells."<sup>2</sup> The event was also recorded, probably by Tyrrell himself, in a two dimensional 'model', consisting of a series of cut-outs mounted on a square base-board. The relevance of this to the *Minstrel* is that her construction was well underway by the

time that the *Countess of Leicester* was being launched and she must be the vessel shown in the model under construction next to the *Countess of Leicester*. She is shown stern on with the hull ready for planking.<sup>3</sup> To have such a representation is very rare and this coupled with the photographs of *Minstrel* towards the end of her career, make her pictorially, very well documented for a small coasting vessel.

Charles Claxton was the surveying officer at Wells in 1847 when the *Minstrel* was registered on 4th September. She was the seventeenth vessel registered that year, bearing in mind that the figure also included vessels registered at Cley. Eight of these were small fishing craft built at Sheringham, Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft and Ludham; four were larger vessels built elsewhere, bought second hand and re-registered at Wells, and four had been built at Wells that year. In addition to the 151 ton *Countess of Leicester*, Tyrrell had also built and launched the 95 ton schooner *Teazer* also registered in April 1847. During the same period John Lubbock had built the schooners *Sydney Claude* (84 tons, registered in February) and *Edward Coke* (87 tons, registered in August) indicating a prosperous period for the Wells shipbuilders.

The *Minstrel* was registered at 59 tons, had two masts and her measurements were; length 57.3 feet, breadth 15.3 feet and depth 8.4 feet. She had a graceful square stern, was carvel built (i.e. the planking was laid flush and not overlapping) and had a scroll rather than a figurehead. She was entirely owned by Thomas Thirtle Mack of Burnham Thorpe.<sup>4</sup> Her master, Henry Howell, also came from Burnham Thorpe. Thomas Mack was described as a ship owner in the registers, which he was, but in previous entries he had just been described as a merchant. He obviously knew and trusted Henry Tyrrell, since, along with John Savory and James Smith of Burnham Overy, he had invested in a third (21 shares) of another of Tyrrell's ships, the 51 ton sloop *Hopewell*, built a year



**Photograph 1. The Countess of Leicester about to be launched in 1847 with Minstrel under construction at Tyrrell's shipyard from a model owned by Tom Dack of Wells.**

earlier. He was obviously happy with his investment, for as well as financing the whole of the *Minstrel*, he also took eight shares in the *Countess of Leicester*.

Burnham had long been a creek of Wells and under its jurisdiction. The vessels traded from Burnham Overy Staith. Although never as important as Wells there was a steady trade during the first half of the 19th century. White's Directory of 1845 describes Overy Creek as "navigable for vessels of 60 or 80 tons up to the Staith, where the spring-tides rise 9 or 10 feet, and where a considerable trade in Coal and corn is carried on, as well as in oysters, of which there is an excellent bed in the offing, where 5 boats and 15 fishermen are regularly employed."<sup>5</sup> Mack and Wiseman were corn and coal merchants based at Burnham Overy and it is likely that both the *Hopewell* (which was part owned by John Savory, miller & maltster in Burnham Overy and later owner of the *Minstrel*) and the *Minstrel* were built in order to control the shipping of their produce. Although the *Minstrel* was primarily involved in trading from Burnham there was a constant interplay between Wells and all of the north Norfolk harbours and the *Minstrel* would have taken cargoes to and from Wells when not needed at Burnham.

Throughout the eighteenth century it was commonplace for proud masters or owners to purchase a painting of their vessel from one of the artists in the major ports who earned a living by faithfully reproducing ships. The *Minstrel*

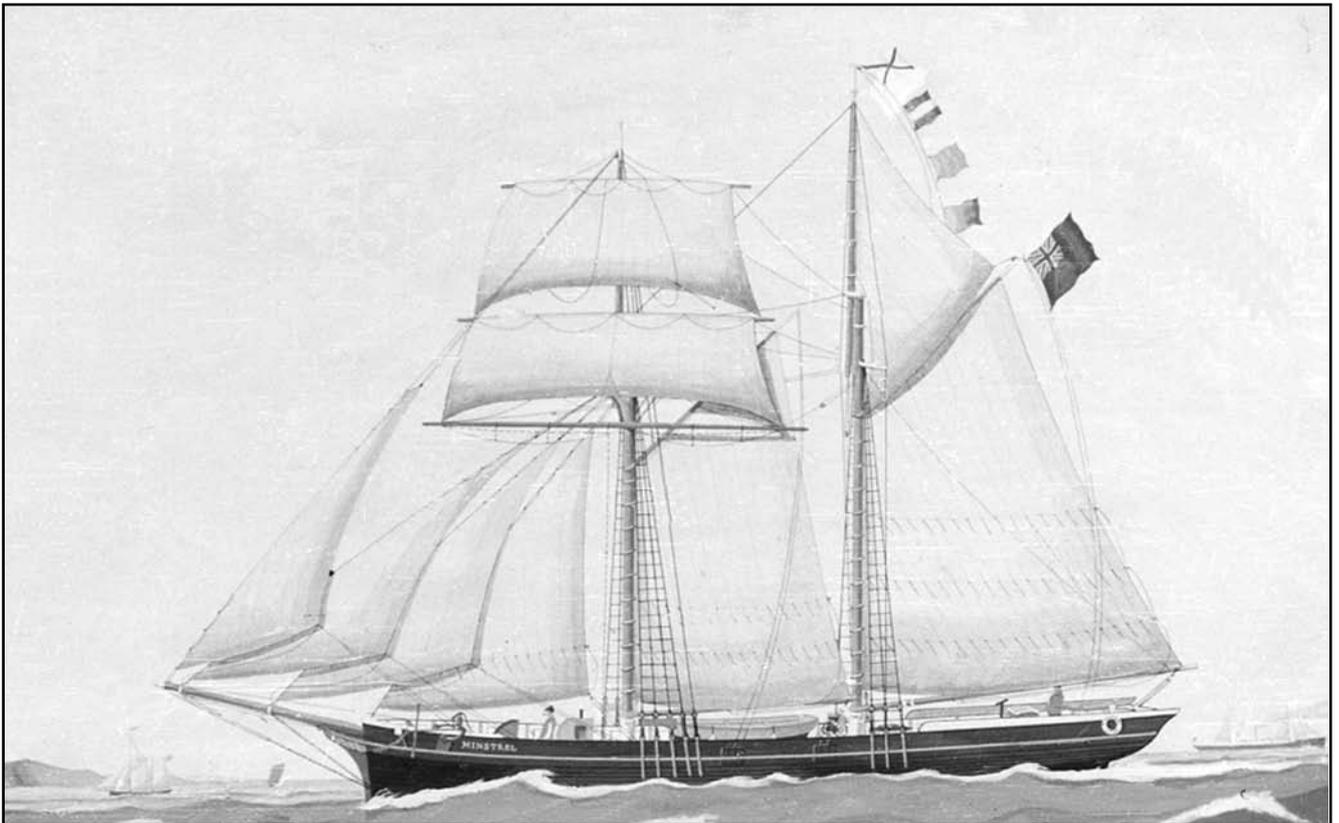
was no exception. Most of the photographs of the vessels were taken in port and the advantage that the ship portraits have is that they show the vessel under sail. By looking at the painting of *Minstrel* on page 6, the two square sails on her mainmast show that she was a top-sail schooner. Two crewmen are shown on deck. However, the shipping registers, record that she was crewed by four men, a fact confirmed by the crew agreements. Strangely, her code flag hoist, used to identify the vessel, which was given as NFKL by the Mercantile Navy List for 1867, does not agree with the flags shown in the painting. She was a fine looking vessel, and the scroll figurehead and her elegant stern are clearly displayed.

### Trading - Overseas

Although primarily involved in the coasting trade, the *Minstrel* did occasionally go overseas as the Crew Agreement for 1863 indicates. On 2nd May of that year she left Hartlepool for Hamburg leaving that port on the 18th to return to Burnham. Later that year she sailed from Hartlepool to Memel (Klaipeda, in present day Lithuania) arriving on 20th June and departing for Britain (probably Blakeney) ten days later. Although no British destination was given, the crew was discharged at Blakeney on 7th August. The Blakeney Harbour Account Book for August 1863 records the *Minstrel* as paying harbour dues of 7s 3d. Since this was charged at a pennyha'penny a ton, this indicates



*Photograph 2. The Minstrel at Blakeney Quay c1900.*



**Photograph 3. Photograph of a ship painting of *Minstrel*, also in 'The Glaven Ports' J J Hooton 1996 p 208.**

the vessel was 58 tons, thereby confirming it to be the *Minstrel*. Also recorded were import dues of 2s 4d. In September, she repeated the trip arriving in Memel on 16th September and again staying ten days before returning probably to Wells, where the crew were discharged on 22nd October.<sup>6</sup>

### Crew

The crew were all from Burnham. They were, Henry Howell, master, 44 years of age, William Smith, mate, 26 years of age, Joseph Scoles, seaman, 23 years of age and Henry Howell jnr., cook, who was just 21. Their wages for the foreign voyages are recorded and are as follows. William Smith, the mate, received £3-10s and Joseph Scoles, seaman got £2-15s. The new apprentice, Henry Howell jnr. only received £1-15s, although he must have discharged his duties creditably because on the second trip to Memel his wages rose by twenty five percent, to £2-00.<sup>6</sup> The *Minstrel* also made nine other coastal voyages that year, all but one starting from Burnham and visited Hartlepool four times and Newcastle once. She was probably carrying grain north and coal southwards. The crew joined the ship on 1st May at Hartlepool, which suggests that she may have overwintered there or at another northern port. After the first voyage to Memel the crew were discharged at Blakeney, whereas after the sec-

ond trip it was Wells. At the end of the year the crew agreement states that all four men were continuing with the vessel and the completed Agreement was delivered to Wells on the 12th January 1864.<sup>7</sup>

### Changing Ownership and Registration

During 1864 the ownership of the *Minstrel* changed hands, although it little affected the crew or the trading pattern. On 23rd August, the owner, Thomas Thirtle Mack, sold 32 shares to his fellow Burnham merchant, John Savory, and 32 shares to Henry Howell, the master.<sup>8</sup> Howell was 45 at this time and when the next transaction took place in 1891, when he relinquished his shares he would have been 72. However, they may have passed to his son, also Henry Howell. In the same year, the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*, the *Minstrel* is recorded arriving at Newcastle from Wells on 24th January.

In 1869 the *Minstrel* was re-registered at the Port of Wells (3/1869, i.e. the third registration of that year) and it is not clear why.<sup>9</sup> When she was first registered in 1847 by Charles Claxton, the surveying officer at Wells, her tonnage was given as 58 2087/3500. The measurement of tonnage had always been a difficult question and the *Minstrel's* tonnage was calculated under the 'New Measurement Rule' which became law in 1836, superseding the rather crude way of

estimating tonnage before that date, that came to be known as the 'Old Measurement'. Prior to 1836 only two measurements (length and breadth) were taken; the depth was assumed to be half the breadth. These figures were then multiplied together and the resultant figure was divided by 94 to give the ships register tonnage. This was clearly an inaccurate measurement and in 1821 the government appointed a Commission to hold an inquiry. Nothing conclusive resulted from this and it was not until a second Commission was appointed in 1833 that a new method for measuring tonnage was recommended. This involved a more complex calculation based on three cross-sectional measurements of the hull. This time the product of these new measurements was divided by 3,500, leading to the awkward fraction of 2087/3500 in the *Minstrel's* case.<sup>10</sup>

The new measurement, which applied to the *Minstrel*, although an improvement on what had gone before, was still not without its problems. Shipbuilders found that a shallower and longer hull allowed the same amount of cargo to be carried but with a reduced figure for register tonnage under the new rules. In 1849 this resulted in a third commission being appointed to find a more satisfactory way of measuring tonnage. Their conclusions were made law in the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854.<sup>10</sup> This time more complex measurements were taken and the final calculation was divided by 100, and this time there was no great financial benefit in having a ship re-registered if there had been no substantial alterations. Therefore it is not apparent why *Minstrel* was re-registered on 16th September 1869, indeed, the register tonnage increased (Table 2).

Ship	Registration	Old Tonnage (pre 1836)	New Tonnage (post 1836)
Ann	5/1836	86 58/94	73 2225/3500
Lady Anne	8/1836	118 23/94	110 1215/3500
Ouse	10/1836	123 47/94	111 33/3500
Albion	14/1836	47 50/94	35 1453/3500
Trial	15/1836	63 53/94	50 2942/3500
Hopewell	20/1836	103 52/94	86 2730/3500
Endeavour	21/1836	57 67/94	40 1469/3500
Huntsman	22/1836	31 86/94	21 2490/3500

**Table 1.**

Existing ships did not need to be re-measured unless extensive alterations to the hull had been made or the owner had requested it. However, it did not take the owners and masters long before they realised that the new and more accurate measurement reduced the register tonnage of their ship (Table 1). The register tonnage was the official figure on which harbour dues and pilotage was assessed. Therefore if the register tonnage could be reduced there was a saving in running costs whilst still having the same space for cargo. This led to a spate of ships

The changes in length and breadth are less likely to have resulted from a rebuild as reflecting the different measurements taken in the 1854 Act.

However, a clue may be found in the difference between the gross tonnage and the register tonnage. Five tons had been deducted from the gross figure for crew space. The 1854 Act exempted crew accommodation above the tonnage deck. In effect this meant that crew accommodation was placed above the deck in the fore-castle or a deckhouse so that there was no taxa-

Year	Gross Tonnage	Length	Breadth	Depth
1847	58 2087/3500	57 3/10	15 3/10	8 4/10
1869	65 73/100	69 2/10	17 6/10	8 4/10

**Table 2.**

being re-registered at Wells in 1836. A selection of the vessels that were re-registered with the change in their tonnage illustrates how the two measurements differed.<sup>11</sup>

ble space below that could not be used for carrying cargo. But in 1867 a new law came into effect allowing crew accommodation, wherever it was situated, to be deducted from the gross tonnage



**Photograph 4. Minstrel at Wells c1895.**

figure. In the *Minstrel's* case this deduction made a register tonnage of 60 tons, only one ton more than the measurement under the old rule. Did this mean that the crew now had more comfortable quarters below deck? None of the existing photographs show any substantial deck housing.

Whatever the reason for the re-registration in 1869 the tonnage was altered again less than 10 years later. In 1878 she was in Yarmouth and being inspected by a Board of Trade Surveyor. The result was an increase in register tonnage summed up by the following letter sent by the Collector of Customs in Yarmouth to the Custom House at Wells, dated 19th July 1878.<sup>9</sup>

"Dear Sir,

*I beg to forward Board of Trade Surveyor's certificate disallowing the 5 tons for crew space from the Register Tonnage of the Minstrel of your Port, official No. 21217, and to acquaint you that the necessary alterations have been made on the Vessels' Certificate of registry"*

From then onwards the *Minstrel* is recorded as being of 65 tons although a further note in 1886 reads "gross tonnage altered from 65 to 66" although this never seems to have been recorded in port records.<sup>12</sup>

During this period the *Minstrel* would still be engaged largely in exporting grain from John Savory's granaries in Burnham and returning

with coal from the north and when not needed in Burnham she would be visiting other ports along the north Norfolk coast, involved in a similar trade. There must have still been a meagre profit involved despite the continuing competition from the railways that was leading to an irreversible decline in the cargoes shipped from the north Norfolk ports.

The *Minstrel* had always been a family concern and for 44 years had been skippered by two masters, Henry Howell senior and junior. She had always been a very reliable vessel. But in 1891 Henry Howell decided to sell his half share in the *Minstrel*. John Savory obviously still had faith in the vessel, for on 9th December 1891 he bought 16 shares from Henry Howell, increasing his share of the ownership to 48 shares. William Temple, her new master, bought the other 16 shares. Temple had been born in Wells in 1852, making him 39 by the time he bought a quarter share in her. He had already been in charge for at least 4 months prior to the purchase since the Wells Harbour Records show that she arrived 'light' from Burnham on 26th September 1891 before departing on 5th October for Newcastle laden with malt with William Temple as her master. She was back in Wells with coals from Shields on 19th October. She did not sail again until after the change in ownership when she left Wells once more on 13th December for Blakeney.

## Voyages

She appears another 8 times in the Wells Harbour Records between 1892-94 and once again in 1897, carrying coals, seed cake or barley, sailing from Wells to Hull, Sunderland and Shields in the north and Burnham and Blakeney on the Norfolk coast.<sup>13</sup>

However, by the close of the 19th century the trading pattern had begun to change. The terminal decline which was now gripping the harbours of north Norfolk meant that there was not enough trade to keep the *Minstrel* permanently employed and she had to go looking for trade wherever it occurred along the east and south coasts.

This is illustrated by the Account of Voyages and Crew for 1901 (Table 3). Of the eighteen journeys recorded, only four, all to Blakeney, were in Norfolk. She left Blakeney on 28th April and did not return for the rest of the year.

Southampton for somewhere else, but encountered difficulties and had to return to the nearest port. This may account for the long period of rest at Cowes where temporary repairs made the journey back up north possible. Another curiosity about the account is why, earlier in the year, it took a month to get from Sunderland to Blakeney (23rd March – 21st April) even if the winds were unfavourable.<sup>14</sup>

In the account of the first half of the year William Temple is described as being from Wells but from Blakeney for the second six months. Whichever place he considered to be home, he saw very little of his native Norfolk now that the *Minstrel* had to sail the south and east coasts of Britain to search for cargoes.

The nature of the crew had changed too. Whereas in 1863 the crew remained the same all year and were all from Burnham, including a father and son, by 1901, only William Temple

## Account of Voyages 1901

Departed	Port	Arrived	Port
18th February	Bridlington	18th February	Hull
21st February	Hull	22nd February	Blakeney
10th March	Blakeney	14th March	Sunderland
23rd March	Sunderland	21st April	Blakeney
28th April	Blakeney	29th April	Grimsby
2nd May	Grimsby	10th May	London
26th May	London	29th May	Yarmouth
3rd June	Yarmouth	3rd June	Orford
6th June	Orford	12th June	Grimsby
29th June	Grimsby	29th June	Hull
10th July	Hull	15th July	Leigh
22nd July	Leigh	22nd July	Gravesend
28th July	Gravesend	31st July	Hull
16th August	Hull	19th August	Bradwell
31st August	Bradwell	2nd September	London
11th September	London	15th September	Southampton
16th September	Southampton	17th September	Cowes
29th October	Cowes	10th November	Hull

**Table 3.**

As can be seen from the table she ranged from Sunderland in the north round to Cowes and Southampton in the south. After 28th April she made 13 more journeys, none of them to Norfolk. From 20th November until the end of the year, she was laid up in Wintringham, on the Humber, for repairs. The *Minstrel* had begun the year laid up at Bridlington before sailing to Hull on 18th February to collect a cargo for Blakeney. Since it took a day to sail from Southampton to Cowes (a distance of only 10 miles), and then *Minstrel* stayed in Cowes for nearly six weeks, it is possible that she left

came from Norfolk. For the first half of the year, the crew, James Eccles (mate), S. Koski (ordinary seaman) and William Robson (cook) all joined the ship in Hull and came from Selby, Finland and London respectively. They were discharged after the first six months and replaced with Victor Belmont (mate), born in Weston Point, South America, Ralph Cragg (able seaman), born in Stratford and Charles Glasby (ordinary seaman), born in London. Charles Glasby left the ship in London on 9th September and was replaced by George Price (cook), from Cardiff, a seventeen year old on his first ship.



**Photograph 5. The *Minstrel* seen at the quay from the High Street Blakeney – From ‘The Glaven Ports’ J J Hooton 1996 p208.**

Two of the crew were discharged in Hull whilst Belmont helped Temple sail the ship to Wintringham where Belmont was discharged. Only William Temple was recorded as staying with his ship.<sup>14</sup>

## The End

By 1904 the *Minstrel* was in an impressive fifty-seventh year of service. Occasionally visiting Blakeney, for William Temple was now in Morston, she was more frequently forced to go further afield for employment. Such was the case for her last voyage. She left Woolwich in February 1904 bound for York with a cargo of government stores. On 17th February she became stranded and lost in a Force 7 easterly gale at Chapel Point, near Chapel St. Leonard’s in Lincolnshire (53° 13’ 45” N, 00° 20’ 30” E).<sup>15</sup> The crew must have got off but it was not thought worth attempting to repair the 57 year old vessel. A note in the registers records “Registry closed 28th November 1904. Advice from M. O. (managing owner) that ship stranded at Chapel, Lincs. She was broken up there in May 1904 by J. J. Simons of Sutton, Lincs., who declares that he destroyed the certificate of

Registry.” The certificate had not been destroyed as a footnote records that “Certificate recd Coastguard, Chapel, Linc.; cancelled and forwarded to Reg. Genl. 19/12/04.”<sup>16</sup>

So ended the *Minstrel*, a regular visitor to all the north Norfolk ports for over 50 years. William Temple went on to become master of the ketch *Admiral Mitford*. Rumour had it that he became famous for sailing her single handed up to the north-east and then returning to the Haven. Here, according to Sam Parsons, he would moor and begin selling coal out of the ship. And there he stayed until all the coal was sold, being a frequent visitor to the quayside pubs. It was during one of these lengthy sojourns that Sam Parsons cousin, Billy Holmes was alleged to have gone aboard and stolen money from the *Admiral Mitford*. The case was brought to court, but as Sam Parsons relates, the local merchant Gus Hill stood up for Holmes and the case was dismissed. Billy Temple felt that Holmes was guilty and in protest refused to drink in Morston again, instead confining his custom to the Blakeney pubs. Sam also said that he was master of the *Reaper*, as well as the *Minstrel* and the *Admiral Mitford*.<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

The *Minstrel* was typical of the ships that provided the bread and butter trade of the Norfolk ports. She went abroad in her earlier years but the bulk of her trade consisted in travelling between Norfolk and the north-east

before having to sail the east and south coasts, being taken wherever the trade was at the end of her life. As the photographs show, she was a handsome ship and also a very safe and reliable one that gave 57 years of profitable service to her owners.

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## References

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- 4 NRO Shipping Registers P/SH/L/10 17/1847
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- 17 Taped conversation of Sam Parsons with Godfrey Sayers

# Kenneth Ernest William Allen

## 1909 - 1992

### An Appreciation

*by Ronald Beresford Dew*

Seventy five years ago everybody with a good education would have been more or less familiar, from their schooldays, with our national history. It would have been quite unfashionable for an adult to spend serious time delving into his local history; and pioneers must have been very determined, to overcome the difficulties.

One of these pioneers was Kenneth Allen (KA); who, in spite of a professional career in London and his many other interests, succeeded in researching and recording volumes of historical information about Blakeney, where he was born. Why should KA have devoted over many years so much time to his local history? And who was this man?

His father, Ernest, was a Blakeney blacksmith. His uncle Walter was a carpenter. Like all the village boys, he went to the elementary school in the village. But, in 1922, he won a scholarship to the famous and ancient public school of Gresham's, in Holt; only four miles away. Thus already by the age of 13, KA must have been comparatively well instructed.

His school days ended, 7 years later, in 1929. He still had not decided what he should do next, when he happened to meet my father who had just brought us all down to Blakeney for the month of August, to stay at Ivy House, near the top of the High Street, with a distant relative who took holiday boarders (as we were every year until 1939).

Blakeney, for children, of all ages, was full of excitements, and a wonderful place. We made our contribution to the economy, by winding up the water for the household in the big galvanised buckets from the eighty foot deep garden well; though we omitted to confess that we sometimes dropped toads down it, as we knew they would prefer to live down there. One, because he was so magnificent, we christened James William Jellybelly.

In the years before the First World War, my father, his brothers and three cousins, had all taken their annual summer holidays together, in

Blakeney. All knew the Allen family well. So it was natural for KA to discuss things with my father and he decided to become a Chartered Accountant like him. He was introduced to and duly articulated to a firm of accountants in Norwich.

So for the next four years he worked in Norwich, to study accountancy by day, and to spend much of the rest of his time studying Art. He was to maintain a close interest in all manner of artistic things for the rest of his life.

He then determined to get himself into the Civil Service. This I regarded as a form of life imprisonment, but he declared that he would get a good pension and he would expect to live on it for another 30 or 40 years. We had a friendly argument about it, but that is what he proceeded to do. Years later, when he retired to Blakeney, he reminded me of that argument, and said with glee that he would now live at his ease forever! So he spent almost all his life working in central London, close to many of the great archives of our history.

There is nothing in this short record to tell us why he should have chosen to devote so much of his life to old documents and all other sources of information on Blakeney's past, and to have done this with such care, and so thoroughly. But that the studies were all of a piece with his character becomes clearer when we turn to his other personal interests, any one of which might well have absorbed most of the time of a less determined man.

I knew KA a little from our earlier holidays and though he was some years older than I was we seemed instantly to take to each other. He asked me to join him on expeditions. These would open up new worlds to me.

One of the first was to go out in a boat to fish on a high tide. This meant walking out over the mud flats, carrying worm-forks, to dig lug worms for bait; and then, before the incoming tide arrived, dragging the boat out to the spot where the Blakeney and Cley channels met,

then nearly opposite the Watch House.

There was more water and more fish in the channels in those days; and with two lines each we pulled in a huge haul of great flat fish! A great memory! And an exhilarating experience, one which I would copy many times in later years. The Pit was then full of fish; and the seals, now such an attraction to tourists, were to be shot if possible; though they knew all about guns and disappeared at the sight of one.

Another expedition might be to cycle to see churches. We once cycled to Binham Abbey, on a bicycle hired for me from Mrs Potterton's very lame son, who let them out for sixpence a day. Binham was much further away in those days. The roads were narrow and dusty and bumpy, the only traffic an occasional farm cart. Our journey seemingly took hours.

Finally we reached the Abbey, which Kenneth wanted to study: the cows munching up to the old walls, the interior damp, and dark and mysterious – and such a stupendous height – and eight hundred years old! It captured the imagination and filled us with romantic thoughts about the Middle Ages.

One day we managed to get our boat right up the Cley channel, to the old Cley windmill, to catch eels, on lines baited with strings of wool; as boys must have been doing, on this spot, for centuries. Or we might just set out to explore, perhaps starting at the quay by watching the daily mystery of the flow or ebb of the tide, sweeping past as since the beginning of time.

We might go up Westgate Street, then called Pig Street; passing the King's Arms, until we came to Walter Allen's house, standing opposite what is today's Spar store, with his big shed behind his house. This was his carpenter's workshop, where he made all manner of things. A carpenter's craft then called for great strength; all heavy timbers had to be cut and planed by hand, with heavy long wooden planes, which created enormous shavings. The whole end of his shed was full of them, to the roof; a class one fire hazard if ever there was one.

I remember my excitement at seeing, half built, the flat bottomed children's boat Walter A was making for us. A flat-bottomed heavy boat was made usually by each man, for himself, who had turned for his living to the hard and lonely life of dredging mussels. Many families lived off the mussel beds in the wintertime, as they had once also lived off the great oyster beds, before these had been wiped out by a devastating disease which destroyed all the oyster beds along the coast. The fisherman's boats were painted white, with black tarred bottoms, but this much smaller edition for us was half decked, and painted a bright pillar box red with white decking. She was a splendid sight with a mast and a sail, but no centreboard, and steered with an

oar. (So we usually chose to row or punt at low tide!) Even after 75 years she is still taken on an annual trip by my son down the Morston Creek to The Pit.

Further along Westgate Street, came the long half bungalow on the corner, with its big old orchard, then full of traditional Norfolk apple trees. Here lived old Man Baker, once a school-master, and old Mrs Baker, a little lady, nut brown, always in carpet slippers, always standing at the door, always smiling. Most memorably, she once said to me, in her broad Norfolk: "Have you been down to the Point now? Isn't that a m-a-a-a-a-avellous place?" And so from that moment it has always been a marvellous place for me.

Then, just before the lane down to Greencroft, one reached the big new garage, recently built by Herbert Pye on the site of the old tannery. This it was said, always stank to high heaven, but in the days of village self-sufficiency, it was necessary to produce the leather for boots, shoes, harness, buckets, and so much else. Herbert Pye was just transferring to cars from horses and carts, and traps for travellers via Holt station, usually having to return to the station to collect all the luggage. There were very few cars or vans in Norfolk at that time.

On the other side of the Morston Road came the green fields, rising to the Downs, seas of gorse, ablaze in gold and yellow, their heavy scent unforgettable. Here one might idle away an entire afternoon watching and listening to the innumerable yellow-hammers, and linnets, and the skylarks turning it all into an enchanted island.

There were no houses then on the south side of the Morston Road, nor on the Langham Road, nor up the Saxlingham Road, nor, on the New Road other than at the top end near the church and which was then lined with big allotments, where every man who could grew vegetables and fruit for his family. Most of the east side of the Back Lane from the church down to the quay, lay alongside open fields dominated by the old windmill.

Blakeney's heart and soul was the quay, a long road up to the church, and a short one round to the Morston Road. There was a sense of tight community surrounded by great open space. The Manor House was then a farm, at the one end of the quay, and at the other end, another farm, often with sheep and pigs.

Yesterday's world was evident everywhere. The quays were rotting. The warehouses, once packed with fine sails and spars, and all the gear needed to maintain wooden sailing ships, were empty, dusty, dirty places, provocative and exciting, full of things once so needed and now rusting or falling to bits. Half way along the

quay, was the smithy, where the smith would teach boys to blow the bellows for him (“up high, down low, up quick, down slow”), full of all sorts of ironwork and fittings which would never be wanted again.

Out on the marshes were abandoned boats falling to bits, their days on the sea in trade now long past. Some had been converted into house boats; but during the war they had been deserted and vandalised for their contents and fittings and dismantled for wood (as happened again in the last War when even a splendid house boat on Pinchen’s Creak full of good books and fine things was turned into a hen house).

Many houses were barely occupied. Lodgers would always be welcome. Pubs in the High Street had closed for lack of custom. There was little activity, for the active life of the past had gone. Visitors were few, tourism had hardly begun.

**A**long the Carnser were bits of once huge wooden posts to which the big boats would have tied, as they waited their turn at the quay. Such relics of better days were all around. The sand hills below the windmill had been the site of shipbuilding. Once, digging there, we found iron chains. A hollow in the corner was the site of a saw pit where all the ship’s ribs and planks had been so laboriously cut. By tradition, there was an entrance to a brick tunnel going up to the priory. Every village in Norfolk claims to have a tunnel or two, but Bernard Starling, the farmer, declared that his plough fell into a big hole, a collapsed brick tunnel; and he had had much difficulty getting his horse and plough out before he filled it in. But there were more significant relics? There had once been a great priory overlooking the sea? The so-called Guild Hall was evidently centuries old.

So the Blakeney into which Kenneth was born, had already been in a long decline, from the fine busy port of its greater days, as it yielded to the silting of the channels and the power of the railways. Although in the previous half century much of England was expanding to heights of prosperity never known before, Blakeney’s population had fallen dramatically. It was now little more than a poor village on the bleak east coast.

Then, when he was five years old, came the colossal impact of The Great War of 1914 which affected everybody and everything. 18 Blakeney men, a significant loss of the fittest men to be able to go to war, were killed. With no trade, life must have been at a low ebb, even before the further impact of the great Recession. Thus for all his early years, he lived under the wide skies of this world of the marshes and the sea, conscious of the great silence out on the marshes

under the moon and the stars, other than the call of birds and the distant waves; a great fathomless, beautiful, natural world, disintegrating.

To prepare for his retirement he bought a piece of land off what is now Pintail Drive, then at the foot of the Downs; and here he designed, in every detail, the house he had built. His drawings were professional; his arrangements were impressive. He included a steep pitched roof rising to a tall apex over a great open attic space from one end of his house to the other, and here he arranged his collections.

The first of these (apart from his researches) and the one which took the most room, was his collection of pictures – but it was a collection with a difference! They were not original works, nor even kept in frames. He had saved all kinds of reproductions, prints and photographs to be found in art magazines and elsewhere, of the works of different artists. For each artist he created a great file of hardboard about a yard square, held by cords woven along the bottom edge, opening like a giant oyster, and in this he arranged his pictures on giant sheets. The ‘oysters’ were on mobile racks, and the house roof had big louvre windows; so there was good light, supplemented with roof lights. Even the chairs were just the right height.

There was plenty of room to sit back before one of these big oyster shows and thus enjoy a splendid hour or two of Breugel or Turner or any other artist he cared to choose; with maybe a mug of coffee to hand – many had been chosen before the day of films and transparencies. It was splendid in its simplicity and, he claimed, all he could afford.

He painted many pictures. He was no mean artist, and delightful examples of his paintings and drawings were displayed around his house. He took his painting seriously. Thus he painted one watercolour of Morston Church (he loved to paint churches) all in shades of blue, in token of his interest in Picasso’s Blue Period, which had created such an impression at the time.

He was a member of a book club; but again it was a book club with a difference! A member received for each month a book in a different language. I think there were three languages, French, Italian and German or Spanish, but there may have been four. As a member you had to read that book during that month. I was astonished. He taught himself these languages as he went along, keeping notebooks, in which he wrote whatever he wished to remember. How did he find the time?

He taught himself to interpret old Latin manuscripts and medieval documents in English or old French, none easily read. But such challenges never daunted him. Education then started with Latin, so he had a good base. He had put together an interesting library with many refer-

ence books and he took great care of them, fitting each one with a transparent cover. Some he particularly treasured. One a most beautiful book on botany, full of lovely illustrations. I recall it because it had been given to him by Walter Dew, who lived at the corner of the High Street and Little Lane, in the house later occupied by John Wallace, who would leave many cottages to the Blakeney Neighbourhood Housing Society.

To music he was devoted and he was himself a good pianist, with a splendid Bluthner in his lounge. But he played to please himself! Once when he was playing a piece by Chopin, he suddenly stopped. "You are thinking that I am missing a lot of the notes! But, you see, I do not care! My mind supplies the notes my fingers fail to touch!" He had been taught by his mother, a pianist herself in the days before wireless and when every house in Blakeney must have its piano.

For gardening he had no interest. Indeed he hated gardening in any form. But in his garden he kept bees, because they intrigued him, or for their honey? He once spent a long time demonstrating a beehive to my sister when she was a schoolgirl; and she remembers to this day how much she enjoyed his talk and the trouble he took.

He accumulated knowledge for its own sake. He loved especially all natural things. But he was not attracted to any form of physical exercise! Early on in his life he went into training to avoid all forms of physical exercise as a waste of good time and seemed to thrive on this diet! Some of these interests and personal traits may be detected again in his devotion to the history of his native village but they do not explain it. He may have been lucky with his history master at school; or his mother, who was well read, like so many other mothers, may have started his interest. But, perhaps, he may have been drawing on much deeper well springs altogether?

Blakeney was another world, remote and with so few people. If boys dragged a boat through the shallows of the channel at low tide to collect giant gillies, for gilly racing across the mud flats, they might take all morning over it, and see only an odd bait digger trudging past – and this in the middle of August! At the Watch House or the Far Point, one had this world to oneself. It would have made an even deeper impression on a sensitive local than on a visitor.

Many careers would have been open to him; but by contrast he would now be vaguely aware of the extent of our national depression, poverty and unemployment. For the great majority, life was too full, and too difficult to start looking backwards. Did he then decide that he preferred his own once flourishing village? Perhaps it was then that he first thought about Blakeney's debt

to its past – and decided this was where his interest lay? He would work for a good living – but not because it would be his interest.

One summer day, in the year 1976, long years after his research was all over, Kenneth invited me again to go with him up into his great attic. This time he pulled out of the shadows two heavy cases which he opened, to take out a collection of files in cardboard covers, frayed at the edges, in various faded colours; and of big envelopes; full of handwritten papers, some loose, others stapled. He took them out and spread them about on the floor on which we were now kneeling, or sitting. It was spellbinding.

We were there for a long while, lost in the fascination of descriptions and enquiries into our local history of so long ago. These were his personal manuscripts, and notes, and records of his researches undertaken over many years and brought together into this collection but which he had not looked at since he put all his papers together when he and his wife packed up their London house on his retirement to Blakeney.

We were like two excited schoolboys! But now he could research no more. He was too remote, too removed from his sources of information. He was becoming infirm. We were lifelong friends. He was anxious for the future welfare of his papers. He wished to give them personally to me. With my experience and interest and with every facility in my University, he knew I would care for them, perhaps even add to them. By giving them to me he knew his work would be safe. I felt overwhelmed to be entrusted with my old friend's work of his lifetime. I could not promise to add to them; but I could, and did promise to mind them, just as he wished.

He would have no delay! He insisted that we lugged the cases straight out of the house and immediately into my car. And so, I am sure full of emotions hidden under his light laughter and gentle friendship, he said goodbye to all his work. Afterwards he was never disposed to talk about his papers; so gradually I ceased to ask. I arranged them to be kept in so many binders, after photocopying them so that duplicates could be kept elsewhere in case of fire. Such unique documents must not be lost.

A memorial to a man with few material ambitions, who may sometimes be thought to be a weak character, but whose life shows the contrary. He was a very determined man who knew what he wished to do. Easy, amused, patient, self-contained without material ambitions, able in his own words to be asleep right through a Civil Service meeting without anybody noticing, content to stay in his niche because at the end he would get a good pension on which to live for

ever. No urge to travel, no wish to change the world. He made no deep impression on his contemporaries, but as a friend incomparable.

After some years it became clear that there was a growing public interest in Norfolk's history and that it would be altogether better for these research papers to be in the Norfolk Record Office. I made it a condition that they were kept together at all times, and entitled the 'Kenneth Allen Papers'.

The Blakeney Area Historical Society is comparatively new but its published researches and its other activities are impeccable. It is therefore with the greatest pleasure that I have given the duplicate set of the Kenneth Allen Papers to the Blakeney Area Historical Society, where they are now available to all serious students.

# Innkeepers and Blacksmiths of Blakeney

## The Allen Connection

by Pamela Peake

*Synopsis: Blacksmiths and innkeepers were at the heart of every successful Victorian village and with four blacksmiths in the family and 40 years at the King's Arms, the Allens were undoubtedly major players. Their integration into the community, family fortunes and vicissitudes, provides the glue to a story of the role of blacksmiths, innkeepers and their premises. From 1861 till just beyond the twentieth century Domesday, it reveals a rather surprising perspective of Blakeney at a time of significant change.*

### Introduction

The gift of a set of Kenneth Allen Papers, a veritable gold mine of information on the villages of the Haven, was the stimulus to take a look at the Allen family in Blakeney and place them in a context (see page 12). Who were they, how long had they been there and how did they fit in? Remarkably, a clue to Kenneth's own perception of his paternal family history in the village can be found amongst his papers in the carefully, hand written transcript of the 1861 census.

Robert and Hannah Allen, Kenneth Allen's great grandparents, were the first of the Allen family to settle in Blakeney when they arrived with three sons in 1861. Although none of them were born in the immediate area, they were none the less, essentially Norfolk people. Robert was the new innkeeper at the King's Arms and his eldest son, Robert Henry, was a young blacksmith.

A powerful combination by any reckoning as father and son, innkeeper and blacksmith respectively, represented two of the essential trades and crafts required for mid nineteenth century village self sufficiency. Completing this picture of a self sufficient Victorian village would be the two other essential craftsmen, a carpenter or wheelwright and a shoe and bootmaker while a second tradesman would be the grocer or more often than not, a general store keeper such as a grocer and draper.

This was at a time when the rural economy was at its strongest. Blakeney, with its dual economy was more than a village, rather a small vibrant seaport town and all the above trades and crafts were present, many times over. However it would be wrong to suppose that such vibrancy existed in isolation, this was not the case. The proximity of Wiveton and Cley, also sharing the Haven, contributed to a strong inter-

dependence. Not for nothing were Blakeney and Cley teamed together as a Head Port between the years of 1786-1853, after which registration of vessels moved first to Wells then in 1882 to Lynn.

The change in status reflected the gradual decline of shipping, as the harbour silted up, and as people moved away to find work in larger towns and cities. It was a double calamity for Blakeney, leaving behind a mix of an ageing community and a work force trying to adapt to change.

The Allen family featured prominently in this scenario of events, arriving as part of the significant in-migrants who kept essential trades and services functioning, while locals with local knowledge tended to maintain maritime occupations.<sup>1</sup> Thus the Allen story is as much about village innkeepers and blacksmiths as it is about their family history. It provides an insight into Blakeney towards the end of the Victorian period and the ensuing Edwardian era from the perception of land based trades and services that experienced much change.

The starting point for this article is a picture of the village in the 1860s, on the eve of Robert and Hannah Allen's arrival it then follows their fortunes as they established another generation of innkeepers and blacksmiths.

### Blakeney in the early sixties

The Census for 1861 provides a detailed picture of Blakeney; it portrays a small, bustling coastal seaport inhabited by 1,021 people, although 68 of them were away from home on census night and of these 52 were mariners and women at sea. The 300 dwellings in the village were predominantly in the High Street with an overflow into Pigg (now Westgate) Street and further west at Greencroft. Not all were occupied, 43 had either occupants absent

or were clearly listed as dilapidated. The building boom that had followed the Inclosure Act of 1824 and the dredging of the New Cut was over and only one new cottage was in the process of being built.<sup>2</sup>

There was a church and three chapels serving the community, a National School attended by 130 children and a panoply of grocers, shopkeepers, tradesmen, craftsmen, bakers, milliners, dressmakers, tailors, shoemakers, four inns and two beerhouses. Merchants, farmers, master mariners, ship owners, pilots and port officials completed the picture of a small, self sufficient port that had regular contact by land and sea with the rest of the country.

Then in early February, just a few weeks before the census was made, the Rector R H Tillard had described the status of widows in the village when he requested aid for widows after the infamous lifeboat disaster.<sup>3</sup> According to Tillard, the majority of the 50 widows in Blakeney had lost their husbands to some casualty connected with the sea. This scene was further highlighted in a directory of 1864 which stated that vessels of 150 tons reached the quay where spring tides rose about ten feet. That year alone saw the arrival of 184 coasting vessels registering 9,502 tons and another 14 of various tonnage from Baltic and Mediterranean ports. Vessels sailing outwards in the same year numbered slightly less, 120, registering 6,613 tons.

This view of Blakeney in the early 1860s would have contrasted sharply with the extensive quay-side activity at Ipswich in Suffolk for this was where Robert and Hannah Allen were living when they made the decision to leave. Furthermore, Blakeney although infinitely quieter, was possibly more attractive as it was in their home county and would bring them closer to Hannah's relatives who were nearby in Cromer.

### Arrival of the Allens

Robert Allen of Coltishall married Hannah Curtis of Cromer on the 13th February 1840 in the parish church of Coltishall.<sup>4</sup> Both were described as being of full age; Hannah, the daughter of Joseph Curtis, farmer, was a servant at the time of her marriage while Robert gave his occupation as baliff. Eleven years later Robert was farming 140 acres, employing 6 labourers and still living in Coltishall where his family had increased by two daughters and two sons.

Three more sons are known to have been born during the following five years and from their births it can be seen that Robert and Hannah were on the move. The first of these sons, James, was born in Horstead, across the Bure from Coltishall followed by Joe in Woodton,

South Norfolk, where Robert was still farming.<sup>5</sup> Then in 1855 when Herbert Hercules's birth was registered by his mother, she gave her husband's occupation as 'Innkeeper' and their address as New Cut (sounds familiar), St. Peter, Ipswich in Suffolk.<sup>5</sup> The family was now complete with seven children born over a period of fifteen years as follows:

Cecilia Curtis Allen	1840
Robert Henry Allen	1843
Anna Ann Allen	1845
Henry Mayes Allen	1848
James Charles Mayes Allen	1851
Joe Curtis Allen	1853
Herbert Hercules Allen	1855

What had caused Robert to leave Coltishall in the first place, and what had prompted him to exchange farming in rural Norfolk for inn keeping on the quay-side in the county town of neighbouring Suffolk? Fascinating questions that have been addressed by many historians exploring the drift from rural communities to urban developments as population levels doubled between 1800 and 1850 then doubled again by the end of the century.<sup>1 & 6</sup>

Whether the family was still together in Ipswich during this time is not known, but certainly the eldest sons may well have moved off to apprenticeships and the daughters into service. By 1861 Robert and Hannah were at the King's Arms in Blakeney with only three of their sons, Robert Henry who was 18 years of age and a blacksmith plus two of the younger boys, James and Joe. Again Robert was listed as innkeeper and this was the occupation he was to pursue until he died some twenty years later. Thus the Allens were part of the 'significant in-migrants' maintaining the vitality of the 'Sales and Service Trades' in Blakeney.<sup>7</sup> But why Blakeney and what had become of all their other children?

Often family and friends were involved in migratory moves of this nature, providing information, contacts and support. Was it Hannah's family, whose father and brother were blacksmiths, who alerted them to the impending vacancy? Or had Robert heard of the opportunities afforded by Blakeney from the brewery, the newspapers or mariners passing through Ipswich on their way between London and ports further north along the east coast? Surely he would have needed business contacts, introductions and the goodwill that is passed on in the trade.

### The King's Arms

At the east end of the quay were three inns, the Calthorpe Arms, Ship Inn and White Horse, all situated in the High Street, as was the Anchor beerhouse. This would have made the position of the King's Arms at the western end of the quay

more attractive, especially with all the additional outbuildings that went with the property. There was even space for a smithy there.

John Easter, the outgoing licensee at the King's Arms had been there for 24 years. Both he and his wife Johanna Nurse were originally from Weybourne and had earlier spent many years in Cley as innkeepers before they left the George and Dragon in 1836 and moved across the Glaven to Blakeney. By 1861 John was 71 and retired, furthermore he was a widower, as Johanna had died the previous year, and recently his son John, had perished in the doomed lifeboat rescue. John Easter was to live a few more years, occupying a dwelling amongst the outhouses of the King's Arms, tending his eight acres.

For Robert and Hannah their nearest competition was the Jolly Farmers, a beerhouse, just a few doors away to the south in Pigg (now Westgate) Street. This was licensed to Henry Baldwin, who ran it alongside his business as a ship's carpenter. Although the establishment had a short life and has long since passed from memory, its development from a private house selling beer at the door, then to a beerhouse and back to a private house can be traced through three generations of one family. There is a lovely twist in the story for the Jolly Farmers became the home of Herbert Hercules and the brew house became the property of his brother, Robert Henry Allen.

The King's Arms was supposedly formed from three fishermen's cottages, possibly in 1760 as indicated by the pantiles on the roof. The inn sat gable end onto the street with a large yard to the south. Another continuous range of outbuildings formed the western and southern boundaries. The premises were large enough to accommodate the entire Allen family, servants and various itinerant lodgers, yet seemingly only four of their children were ever recorded living there, that is the three sons noted in the 1861 census and their youngest, Herbert Hercules, who was there by 1871. But before their first year was out, Robert and Hannah were to lose two of their boys, namely James and Joe.

### **An epidemic of scarlet fever**

It was not unusual for parents at this time to lose young children, indeed as many as 25% of all infants died before their first birthday.<sup>8</sup> James and Joe however were older, aged 9 and 7 respectively, and died just 8 days apart suggesting that something had happened that was common to both.

Moreover, the exceptionally high number of burials of young children recorded in the Blakeney Burial Registers at this time suggests

that the factor was possibly a contagious disease. Whatever it was, and discounting the very young who were more likely to have died from natural causes, it affected especially those aged between 2 and 9 years. A total of 18 youngsters died between October and the end of the year, but no more were buried until the following March (Table 1).

Amongst those who died were three sets of children from the same family home, namely the Allen and Baines brothers and the Elsy children. In addition, some were close neighbours, like the Elsy children and William Tomlin who shared and played in the same or adjacent yards. Yet, many families had other children in the same house who were unaffected, but they were almost always aged 10 years and over.

The death certificates for James Allen and Thomas Cornelius Elsy, who both had a sibling dying at the same time, gave the cause of death as scarlet fever.<sup>9</sup> It is not unreasonable to conclude that there had been an epidemic passing through the community.

### **The nature of the disease**

Scarlet fever, also known as scarlatina in older literature, was one of the Victorian "filth diseases", diphtheria, tuberculosis, typhoid and cholera completing the group.<sup>8</sup> The first three were all respiratory diseases while typhoid and cholera, which were the most feared, were diseases associated with dirty water. All of these filth diseases flourished in Victorian Britain in the overcrowded areas of urbanisation where epidemics flared up, taking their toll as they passed through the communities. These diseases were no respecter of persons, young and old, poor and not so poor were affected as was shown by the untimely death of Prince Albert who contracted typhoid and died barely two months after James and Joe Allen succumbed to scarlet fever.

Scarlet fever spreads most commonly between people by infection from respiratory droplets in the air, with a higher incidence during winter and spring and where there is crowding and close contact. Young children are particularly susceptible. Nowadays, in Britain, epidemics of scarlet fever are almost unheard of as it is easily treated with antibiotics and by house quarantine, but not so in the Blakeney of 1861.

Recent analysis has shown a correlation between raised wheat prices during the interval when a woman was pregnant caused increased susceptibility in the subsequent offspring.<sup>10</sup> In this situation wheat prices are indicative of food prices generally, so food is implicated and the effect would be more noticeable during economic depression. Was this the reason why there was a higher than normal number of deaths amongst one year olds and under during August and September 1861 (Table 1) ?

Date of burial	Name	Age
Aug 22nd	Mary E Anthony	2 mths
Aug 30th	George Cushing	6 mths
Sep 5th	Ann E Cushing	4 mths
Sep 6th	Henry B Jordan	3 mths
Sep 13th	Phoebe Woodhouse	1 yr 4 mths
Sep 13th	Mary A Holmes	1 yr 3 mths
Sep 18th	Elijah Woodhouse	1 yr
Sep 22nd	Robert W Russell	1 yr 1 mth
Oct 5th	Margaret Thompson	5 yrs
Oct 28th	Jane E Carr	1 yr 3 mths
Oct 31st	Robert J Starling	5 mths
Oct 31st	James C M Allen	9 yrs
Oct 31st	Abihu Barwick	6 yrs
Nov 6th	Matilda M Cooke	9 yrs
Nov 7th	Henry M Mann	4 yrs
Nov 7th	Joe C Allen	7 yrs
Nov 8th	Esther Cushing	3 yrs
Nov 17th	Murrell Baines	4 yrs
Nov 22nd	Elizabeth A Rust	2 yrs
Nov 22nd	James W Baines	2 yrs
Nov 25th	Louisa H Mann	3 yrs
Dec 6th	Herbert Pye	3 yrs
Dec 9th	Walter Harvey	3 yrs
Dec 10th	Mary A Betts	8 mths
Dec 13th	Parry Bond	5 yrs
Dec 15th	Mary A Elsy	9 yrs
Dec 15th	William Tomlin	5 yrs
Dec 20th	Thomas C Elsy	2 yrs
Dec 27th	John Starling	3 yrs
Mar 16th	Samuel D Shorting	3 mths
Mar 23rd	Henry W Overton	2 yrs

**Table 1. The children and infants buried in Blakeney churchyard, late 1861 and early 1862.**

### Domestic housing – the problem?

Just as the King's Arms was built around a yard so was the bulk of the domestic housing in the village. Blakeney became a magnet for people on the move, looking for work and accommodation, was it a crisis in the making? New housing stock had been hastily erected in existing vacant spaces and on garden ground behind houses fronting the street. Now there was a concentration of people living and working in confined spaces.

Several families often shared all the facilities of a common yard such as the well, privies and collection points for refuse. The rise in small businesses operating from homes meant that any available space, such as attic or cellar, would have been used for storage or even as

workrooms. Houses that had rooms opening to the street often operated as shops. This overcrowding and constant movement of adults and children between home, work place and shop facilitated the spread of diseases. The pattern is clearly visible in the Blakeney School log book that shows the range of diseases regularly sweeping the villages of Glandford, Wiveton and Blakeney.<sup>11</sup>

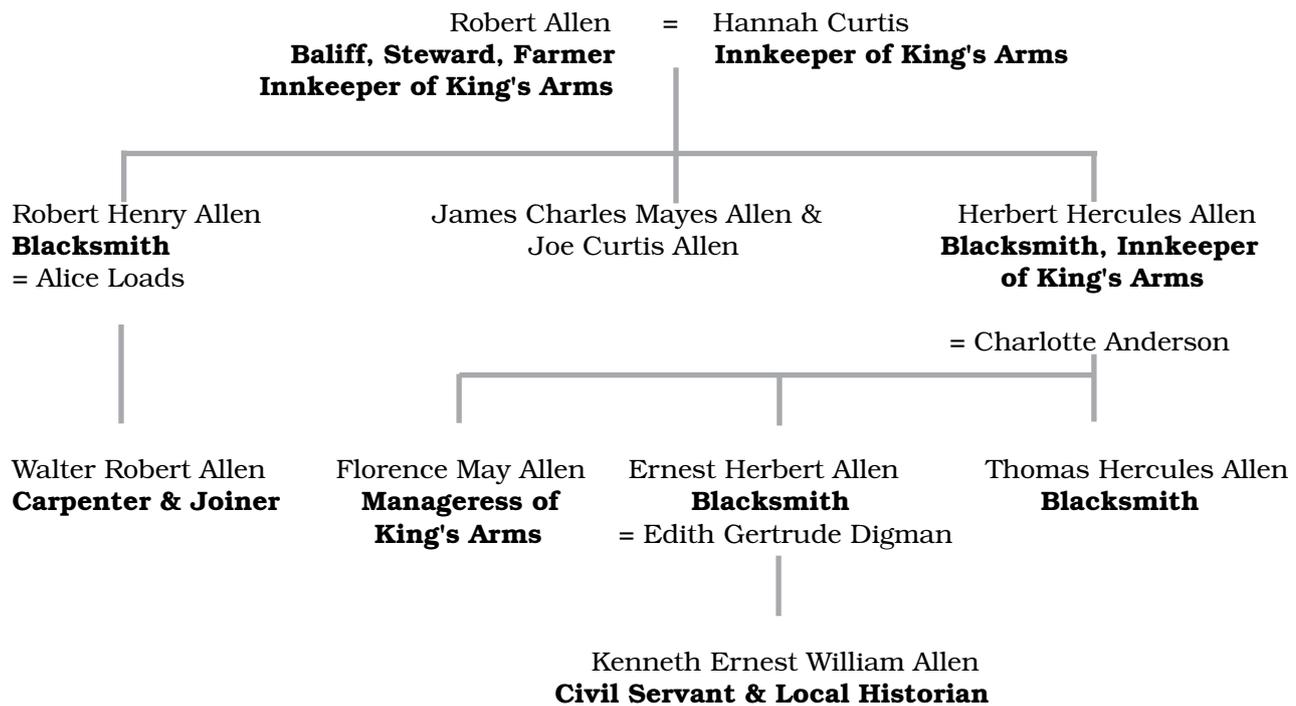
It was not necessarily the houses that were the problem, rather the rate of growth and the consequent overcrowding. This was also at a time when the miasmatic theory of disease still prevailed and very little attention was paid to public health at a local level.<sup>8</sup> On a wider scale there was major loss of life from filth and bad ventilation during the nineteenth century with labourers generally having the lowest life expectancy followed by tradesmen then the professionals.

### Three weddings and three funerals

**O**n a much happier note, Robert and Hannah were able to enjoy the marriage of three of their children locally, two in Blakeney and one in Stiffkey and anticipate the prospect of being surrounded by another generation of Allens. Robert Henry, their eldest son, was the first when he married Alice Loads on Xmas Day 1873. She was the daughter of a fisherman, Michael Loads, himself the descendant of a long established family in the village.

Perhaps it was the very fact that it was Xmas Day that enabled his sister and brother, Cecilia and Henry Allen, to be present for their signatures are there in the parish register as witnesses. But where had they come from? Not until 1881 is there a clue, at which time Cecilia, who appears never to have married, was located as a lodger in St. Marylebone, London. She had obviously gone into service and gave her occupation as housemaid. Henry, on the other hand, was a Foreman Tailor, having learnt his craft in Cromer in the early 60s when living with his grandparents; he probably served his apprenticeship with his uncle James Curtis.<sup>12</sup> Henry was married with several children and lived in St Pancras, not far from Cecilia and it becomes very tempting to picture them arriving in Blakeney for the wedding by the *London Packet* rather than travelling overland!

Anna Ann Allen also left her signature in the registers when she married Frederick K Grindell in 1876 and had her elder brother Robert as a witness, but their subsequent whereabouts is a complete mystery despite an exhaustive search. A year later, Herbert Hercules married Charlotte Anderson of Beetly in the parish church at Stiffkey.<sup>13</sup> On that occasion there were no Allen signatures as witnesses.



**Figure 1. An outline family tree showing occupations.**

Robert and Hannah had arrived in Blakeney when they were in their early 40s and lived to be hosts at the King’s Arms for twenty years before Robert died in December 1881. This was barely three months after his eldest son, a blacksmith, died aged 34, leaving Alice a widow with three young children, the youngest, Walter Robert, being no more than a toddler. Hannah continued looking after the King’s Arms presumably with the help of her son, Herbert Hercules who took over the license when she died in 1884. In 1901 it was his daughter Florence who was manageress of the inn with her two bachelor brothers Ernest and Thomas living there. Herbert still held the license, but had moved just a few doors away in Westgate (Pigg) Street next door to Walter.

All the key players in the family have now been introduced and their kinship and occupations are shown in Figure 1.

The family connection with the King’s Arms came to an end in 1901. The new license was granted to Henry Turner in March and in the following year, and almost to the day, it was taken over by William E King, the recently retired coast guard who had spent much of his service in Morston.<sup>14</sup>

### Village Innkeepers

Long family associations with the inns and beerhouses in Blakeney were not uncommon in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While Robert Allen and his family had been at the King’s Arms, John Pye and John Bowles had been landlords of their respective inns, see Table 2.

William Hooke, coxswain of the first Blakeney RNLI lifeboat was briefly at the Ship Inn from 1861 till 1871. He combined the roles of innkeeper with tug master, although in the latter years it was his wife who held the license. Meanwhile at the top of the High Street, William Wells had married Sarah Sands, the widow of the previous landlord of the Calthorpe Arms, and moved in. By 1871 the couple had moved down the High Street to the quay and into the Crown and Anchor. With them on both occasions was her father, Richard Mayes, the old Harbour Master now aged 90 and long since retired.

Another series of family connections is shown by the brothers George and Herbert Long who later, in the twentieth century, took over from their respective in-laws, Anthony Brown and Sarah Vurley. They were operating across the street from one another and only a stone’s throw from Mariners Hill where they had been born, the sons of George and Catherine Long. George senior was a fisherman but probably better remembered as the coxswain of the lifeboat, following

<b>Date</b>	<b>Anchor</b>	<b>Calthorpe Arms</b>	<b>Crown and Anchor</b>	<b>Kings Arms</b>	<b>The Ship</b>	<b>The White Horse</b>
<b>1861</b>	John Bowles	William Wells		Robert Allen	Wm H Hooke	John Pye
<b>1871</b>	John Bowles	Thomas Mitchell	William Wells	Robert Allen	Joseph Pyman	John Pye
<b>1881</b>	John Bowles	Thomas Mitchell	James Pinchen	Robert Allen	Thomas Pyman	John Pye
<b>1891</b>	John Overman	Thomas Cozens	James Pinchen	Herley Allen	W Ezra Bond	John Forsdick
<b>1901</b>	Anthony Brown	Laura McMahon	Benjamin Curle	Florence Allen	W Ezra Bond	John Scott
<b>1910</b>	Anthony Brown	Emma Coe	John Curle	William King	Ezra Bond	Sarah Vurley
	<b>Closed 1953</b>	<b>Closed 1968</b>	<b>Closed 1920</b>		<b>Closed 1967</b>	

**Table 2. Blakeney licensees recorded at the time of the decennial censuses between 1861 and 1901, then in Valuation Listing for 1910, followed by dates of closure for those that gave up the struggle. The Jolly Farmers is ignored because of its brief existence.**

on from William Hooke. Herbert or Herbert Charles Long, to give him his full name was of course better known as Charlie Long, husband of Susie, last Harbour Master and last coxswain of the Blakeney Lifeboat.<sup>15</sup>

### **Village Blacksmiths**

Village self-sufficiency was never in doubt during the nineteenth century. All the necessary crafts and trades were represented serving the needs of both the agricultural and maritime trades. Blacksmiths were plentiful, judging from the individuals named in the census returns (Table 3). There were general smiths, tin smiths, braziers working with brass, iron bar moulders working in the foundry, journeymen passing through and so on. Many names occur only once in the censuses, as there was a continual turnover with the in-migrants filling the gaps and keeping the smithies working, then there are the names of young village apprentices who generally moved away once their apprenticeships had been served.

What the censuses do not reveal are the locations of the smithies or the nature of the work undertaken and there is no mention of a farrier. Why did the number of blacksmiths increase towards the end of the century when the maritime trade was in terminal decline? Did the increasing mechanisation of farming provide an opportunity to use their skills? And where are the photographs of the blacksmiths or farriers at work which most villages seem to be able to produce?

Fortunately the Directories provide some answers, for Blakeney there were three families that dominated the scene from the 1830s to the 1930s namely Pond, Allen and Smith.

The Allen family had two sets of brothers that were village blacksmiths, Robert Henry and Herbert Hercules being the first, followed by Ernest and Thomas, the sons of Herbert. Their collective working years began in 1861 with Robert and continued into the twentieth century until Ernest, his nephew, retired; Thomas having moved away earlier to live in Norwich. When Robert Henry arrived, William Starling Pond was the established smith, while Ernest Allen, the last blacksmith of the family, witnessed the rise of James Curry Smith. For a short while Samuel Pyke appeared to be in competition with Herbert but he died early in 1901, aged 42; perhaps it was his business that Curry Smith stepped into.

### **The Pond family**

In 1864 William Starling Pond, another relatively young blacksmith, was running his own business at the same time as Robert Allen. Whereas Robert was just starting out, William had inherited the family business set up by his grandfather, William Pond. This business had been in existence since the 1820s at least, when the blacksmith's shop in the High Street, together with several messuages, were claimed then awarded to William Pond at the time of the Inclosure.<sup>2</sup> He listed his business in every directory published between 1830 and 1854 where his services were described at various times as a general smith, brazier, tin smith, and ironmonger.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Place of birth</b>
<b>1841</b>	Samuel Bell	50	blacksmith	
	Robert Mitchell	30	smith	
	William Parson	65	smith	
	William Pond	55	smith	
	Thomas Spence	80	smith	
<b>1851</b>	William Lee	49	smith	Hempstead
	Daniel Pitcher	30	brazier	Hunworth
	William Pond	65	blacksmith	Langham
	William S Pond	16	smith learner	Blakeney
<b>1861</b>	Robert Allen	18	blacksmith	Coltishall
	James Earl	28	brazier	Foulsham
	William Lee	58	blacksmith	Hempstead
<b>1871</b>	George Abel	36	blacksmith	Wells
	Robert Allen	25	blacksmith	Coltishall
	Herbert Allen	15	blacksmith	Ipswich
	Joshua Dew	19	apprentice	Blakeney
	William S Pond	36	blacksmith	Blakeney
	William Savage	15	apprentice	Burnham
	Frederick Wisker	21	journeyman blacksmith	Blakeney
<b>1881</b>	Robert Allen	37	blacksmith	Coltishall
	Herbert Allen	25	smith	Ipswich
	Albert Brighty	26	blacksmith	Mattishall
	George W Cooke	39	fireman blacksmith	Langham
	Walter J Hurrell	18	blacksmith	Blakeney
	Richard Newbegin	19	blacksmith	Blakeney
	Samuel Pyke	22	blacksmith	Morston
	William Warman	28	iron moulder	Norwich
<b>1891</b>	Herbert Allen	36	blacksmith/innkeeper	Ipswich
	Albert Brighty	36	blacksmith	Mattishall
	Robert M Frost	20	blacksmith	Walsingham
	James Jarvis	22	blacksmith	Blakeney
	Samuel Pyke	32	blacksmith	Cley
	Edward Shepherd	26	blacksmith	Walsingham
	Curry Smith	23	blacksmith	Stiffkey
	Samuel Thompson	44	brazier	Blakeney
	William Warman	37	iron moulder	Norwich
<b>1901</b>	Herbert Allen	45	blacksmith	Ipswich
	Ernest Allen	22	blacksmith	Blakeney
	Thomas Allen	20	blacksmith	Blakeney
	James E Bond	20	blacksmith	Blakeney
	Albert Brighty	46	blacksmith	Matishall
	Horace Brighty	21	blacksmith	Blakeney
	Samuel Gotts	19	blacksmith	Morston
	Isaac Mann	18	iron moulder	Blakeney
	Edward Shepherd	36	blacksmith	Walsingham
	James Smith	34	blacksmith	Stiffkey

**Table 3. Blakeney blacksmiths recorded in the censuses. Parish of birth was not recorded in 1841 and Samuel Pyke was obviously confused.**





**Photograph 1. Thomas Hercules Allen is on the extreme left, flying high over the hurdles which are not too dissimilar to the Norfolk five bar gate.**

*Photograph provided by Paul Allen Barker.*

elusive crane on the quay that is only ever briefly glimpsed in early postcards? Page after page and month by month, it tells the same story. Finally, for January 1880, there is an entry that reads “Rent of Premises at £10 up to 11th October 1879”. At this stage, the Allens were just tenants of their smithy, but where was it situated?

The continuity of the family businesses was suddenly jeopardised when Robert Henry and his father died within a few months of each other. Herbert was effectively left to help his aged mother at the King’s Arms and taking control at the blacksmith shop besides having a very young family of his own. It was not until 1901 that the names of Ernest and Thomas, his sons, appear as young 20 year-old blacksmiths. Indeed, Herbert is never glimpsed again in the records, only his wife as Mrs H Allen widow in 1910.<sup>20</sup>

Ernest and Thomas were keen sportsmen and have been captured in many team photographs, particularly cricket and football, while the agility of Thomas at the annual sport’s day was demonstrated as he flew over the hurdles (Photograph 1). This continuing interest in sports was maintained by Ernest who was an Honorary Secretary of the Regatta Sports in August 1914 when the newspapers reported “This old established North Norfolk aquatic fixture was duly brought off .... in most depressing circumstances. Owing to the national peril, but little interest was taken, and with the wet weather this evaporated”.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, first prize of a pig was won by M Long on the “hori-

zontal greased pole” and J Bond took second prize with 10lb of beef. And a programme of athletic events was carried out on the golf marsh, so far as the weather permitted.

Shortly after 1901, Thomas seems to have forsaken Blakeney and moved to Norwich where his wife Mildred had a confectionery business. Did he see the change looming and move off to better prospects? Although they spent most of their working life in Norwich, Thomas and Mildred returned after the second world war to spend their retirement in Blakeney living in Miranda Cottage in Little Lane.<sup>19</sup>

### **James Curry Smith**

Meanwhile Albert Brighty had arrived in Blakeney in the 1880s as a young blacksmith and was later joined by his brother-in-law, James Curry Smith. Both men had sons who also became blacksmiths and it was not long before both families were living next door to each other in the yard adjacent to Russell’s bakery at the top of the High Street. The yard has been known at various times as Nurse’s Yd, Smith’s Yd and even Curry’s Yd. Jane Nurse was the owner of the properties while the Brighty and Smith families were her tenants.

Then in 1916, Kelly’s Directory lists the last of the village blacksmiths, Ernest Allen and (James) Curry Smith and it is their smithies that we know more about, first the earliest Ordnance Survey map shows where the smithies were located and then later from some rather surprising sources which clarified both ownership and occupation.

## The Twentieth Century Domesday Book<sup>20, 21 & 22</sup>

Ernest Allen's son, Kenneth, was born just as Lloyd George was introducing new measures to tax land in his 1909 Budget - enacted as the Finance (1909-1910) Act. The significant proposal in this act was a tax on increases in the value of land and property that had accrued from improvements made by central and local government. Before an assessment could be made, it was necessary to identify the owner(s) of every piece of land in the kingdom. For only then could it be surveyed in order to fix a basic valuation dated as of 30th April 1909, from which increases would be calculated.

Firstly, Valuation Books<sup>20</sup> were prepared with information provided by the Inland Revenue Department and landowners.<sup>23 & 24</sup> Each piece of land, with or without buildings on it, was given an unique (assessment) number and the owner(s) and occupant(s) were identified. Altogether there were 40 columns available for facts and values for each piece of land.

Subsequently, this information was checked, amended and expanded by surveyors when they undertook their inspections of every piece of land. All this data is recorded in a second set of books, the Field Books together with on-site valuations.<sup>21</sup> They were also armed with the relevant Ordnance Survey map and authority to inspect on demand.

The surveyors described each property, noting its condition, drawing sketches and plans to clarify any detail. Farmyard buildings were particularly noted. The date of inspection was recorded as well as any subsequent changes in ownership or tenancy. Valuations were made by the surveyor, following the inspection.

The entry for each assessment covers four pages and there were a 100 to each Field Book and seven Field Books for Blakeney.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, each property or piece of land was outlined with a colour wash on the most recent and largest scale Ordnance Survey Map available. These maps serve as visual indices to all the assessments and without them the Valuation Books and Field Books are unfathomable.

The ensuing result was one of much confusion and open to many interpretations and abuses. Not surprisingly, it all came to an end when the Finance (1909-1910) Act was repealed in 1920. However, much of the resulting paper work and records have survived.

The Valuation Books have become known as Domesday Books and are to be found in County Record Offices, while the Field Books and accompanying maps (Record Plans)<sup>22</sup> are deposited in The National Archives at Kew, London. Together, they are a major legacy providing a key source of information for local historians

and many others including geographers, economists and sociologists. For the very first time in British history it is possible to know exactly who owned what and who was living where.

This is the real Domesday. Once the 1911 census books are released in 2011 and we are freed from the 100 year rule regarding confidentiality, the impact and full potential of this resource will be truly awesome.

### All is revealed on the Quay

The information that flows from this Act allows the smithies to be positively linked with specific blacksmiths and to follow more closely some of the changes that were occurring along the quay as the harbour ceased trading and the merchants sold up and left. For the inns, there are telling comments in the Field Books.

The quay-side had long been the arena of the merchants with their houses, barns, granaries, warehouses and offices dominating the front and the smithies strategically tucked in amongst them. It was the commercial hub of the village, where the rural hinterland interacted with maritime trade. For the blacksmiths, they were admirably placed, coal for their forges and foundry was on hand, ships and lighters were moored nearby and of course they were also well placed to deal with horses and carts on the flat. Likewise, virtually every inn and beerhouse in the village was near the quay, except for the Calthorpe Arms at the top of the High Street.

A list of the smithies, inns and Allen homes that were sited on the quay, or close by, has been extracted from the Valuation Book and is shown here in Table 4 while Figure 3 highlights the same properties captured on the accompanying map.

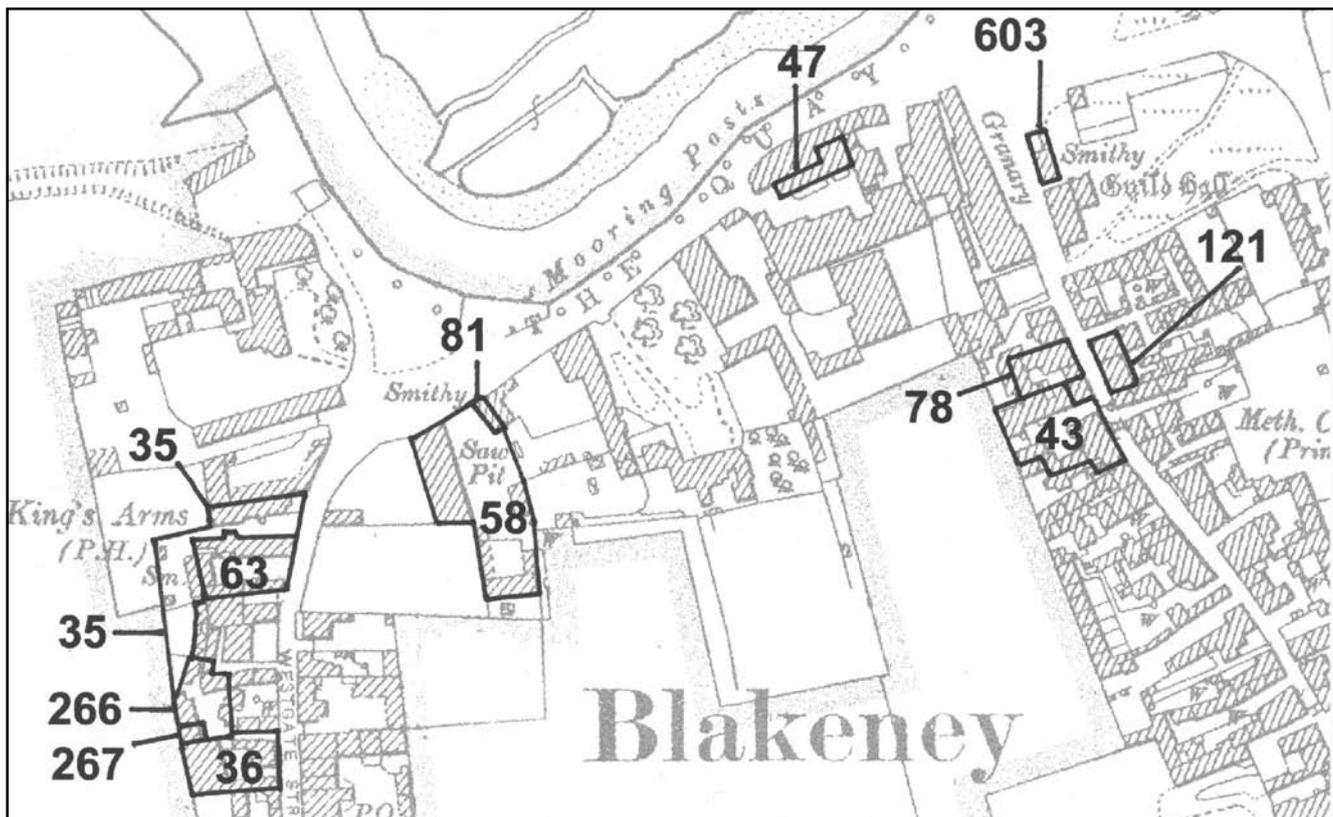
The smithies of Ernest Allen and Curry Smith can be pinpointed with certainty; Ernest owned the premises at the bottom of the High Street (Photograph 2) and rented another from Lord Calthorpe, while Curry Smith according to the Valuation Books rented a shop from C J Ash, although the Field Book subsequently identified it as a "small smiths".

The blacksmith premises in Westgate Street bounded the King's Arms on the north and west, and was an impressive sized brick and tile smithy with a large yard far surpassing any others in the village. It extended southwards reaching the property that had been Herbert Hercules Allen's home, but was now occupied by his widow, Charlotte, whilst next door to her was Walter Allen's home, with his capacious carpenter's workshop to the rear.

Walter is still remembered by the older people in the village if only for the barometer that was on a wall beside his house in Westgate Street (Photograph 3); as time passes and memories fade it is often forgotten he was Ernie

Ass. No. Value	Description of Premises	Occupier	Owner	Extent	Gross
35	Blacksmiths shop	Ernest Allen	Lord Calthorpe	30p 11y	£180
36	Cottage	Walter Allen	Walter Allen	16p 23y	£235
43	The Ship Inn	Ezra Bond	Morgans and Co	20p 27y	£801
47	Crown & Anchor	John Curle	Augustus Hill	5p 27y	£400
58	Granaries	Clifford Turner	C J Ash	1r 13p 21y	£350
63	King's Arms	William King	Morgan and Co	18p 6y	£401
78	The White Horse	Mrs Vurley	Bullard and Son		£500
81	Shop	Curry Smith	C J Ash	1p 27y	£ 15
121	The Anchor	Anthony Brown	Lacon and Co	5p 12y	£450
266	Cottage	Mrs H Allen	W Starling exors	3p	£ 61
267	Cottage	Mrs H Allen	W Starling exors		£ 56
603	Smithy	E H Allen	E H Allen	3p 21y	£ 22

**Table 4. Summary of Valuation Book entries for the smithies, inns and Allen properties sited on the quay or nearby. The extent of each assessment was measured in acres (a), roods (r), perches (p) and yards (y).**



**Figure 3. Map of quay side showing location of properties assessed in 1910. Navigate between Table 4 and this map by using the assessment numbers to locate relevant information. The 1907 OS 1:2500 was used by the surveyors, north is at the top of the page.**

Allen’s cousin. His building of the UCL laboratory on Blakeney Point in 1913, is recalled on page 69.

Returning to the entry in the Valuation Book, the surveyor subsequently found on arrival for his inspection that Charlotte Allen was no longer there. 266 and 267 on the map were now the property of Augustus Hill and occupied by his tenants W Long and J Forsdick respectively.

James Curry Smith’s small shop is interesting because two sets of auction papers provide descriptions of it, first in 1906<sup>25</sup> when Charles Johnson Temple-Lynes sold his estate, then again in 1929<sup>26</sup> when the Ash estate was put up for auction. In 1906 it was part of Lot 6 which Page and Turner rented as yearly tenants. The auction details go on to describe “The Blacksmiths shop erected on this site belongs to Messrs. Page

and Turner and the Purchaser will have to pay in addition to his Purchase money, the sum of £12"; the additional money was for the shop as this was not included in the auction.<sup>25</sup>

Details of the sale were duly noted in the Field Book, then in 1929 the smithy was part of Lot 8 and described as "On the East side of the yard are Capital Blacksmith's Shop, Newly erected Shoeing Traverse with a small piece of ground adjoining, as now in occupation of Mr Curry Smith (a yearly tenant) at a rental of £5.4.0 per annum". He was to have tenancy till the following May, 1930.<sup>26</sup>

### **All is revealed – The Inns**

The King's Arms, for so long the family home of the Allens, was described by the surveyor in the Field Book as old and dilapidated. Outside there was a covered yard and an old flint and tile empty cottage, cart shed and stabling and store sheds. Most of these formed the southern range of buildings that have now been demolished making way for the car park. The inn was owned by Morgan of Norwich, as was the Ship in the High Street.



**Photograph 2. Ernest Allen's Smithy (603 on the map) at the bottom of the High Street with Clifford Turner's new office towering behind. Photograph from Perry Long's Collection**



**Photograph 3. Looking south along Westgate Street early 1900s. Walter Allen's barometer is just visible on the right, attached to the wall leading to his workshop at the rear of his house. Photograph from G Cubitt's Collection**

The Field Book records that the Anchor was bought by Lacon and Co of Norwich in February 1903, together with an adjoining five roomed cottage, three rooms being upstairs and two on the ground floor. The three storied Crown and Anchor on the quay was owned by the Blakeney merchant, Augustus Hill; it formed part of a larger property subsequently auctioned in 1915 which was later demolished to make way for the Blakeney Hotel.<sup>27</sup>

The oldest surviving public house in the village, The White Horse, was owned by Bullard & Son of Norwich. The full description in the Field Book declared it to be an old brick, flint and tiled two-storied building with stuccoed front and in very good repair. All downstairs and upstairs rooms were listed, in particular, the six bedrooms were noted as very small and it was further noted that outside there was a detached newly built, one storey brick, flint and tiled tea-room, fully licensed, and also a stable and cart shed with loft over. The surveyor concluded "Best place in the village, but very little trade". It says it all!

Since 1910 the White Horse has expanded considerably, acquiring property to the north and south, which has been subsequently either incorporated or demolished.

The assessments outlined above demonstrate that the wealth of detail found in the Field Books includes information on recent sales (together with prices), details of new owners and occupiers, the style of property with number and arrangement of rooms, comments on condition that were relevant to value, besides identifying details of trades and retail outlets previously listed simply as shops. It builds an intimate and detailed picture of Blakeney that is now beyond recall.

## Adapting for Survival

Blakeney in the 1920s was a very different village to the one that Robert and Hannah Allen would have known when they arrived sixty years earlier. Gone was the bustle along the quay-side. Gone were the mariners and seamen frequenting and lodging in the inns, and gone were the endless lines of horse drawn wagons and carts attending the ships and lighters moored along the quay. Also absent were all the young men from the village who had lost their lives in the Great War and those who had emigrated to start afresh somewhere else. The numbers of people living in the village were not too different to the numbers recorded for 1800.

By the 1930s cars and buses were regularly bringing small numbers of visitors and holiday makers to enjoy the sporting and leisure facilities of the Haven, together with the comforts provided by the Blakeney and Manor Hotels.

The hospitality trade had taken a new direction, even if the new Hotels had to close for the winter months.

Likewise, the blacksmiths were adapting to changing times and Ernest Allen, last of the Allen family blacksmiths, was in a commercial directory as a "hot water engineer". Curry Smith however, now located in New Road, Blakeney, was listed in bold as "Smith, James Curry and Son blacksmiths, agricultural and general smiths, pump work, hot and cold water engineers and sheet metal workers; ornamental work forged".

The activities of these blacksmiths are well within memory of the older residents today and they are recalled with some regard as Curry Smith and Ernie Allen. Curry died Xmas Eve 1940 and was succeeded by his only surviving son, Herbert, who carried on at the new forge on the New Road until the 1950s. He was the last blacksmith in the village, Ernie Allen having retired earlier.

Both of these blacksmiths had reinvented themselves as plumbers. Consequently many houses built along New Road and Morston Road can attest to running hot and cold water, whether it be upstairs in bathrooms for the adventurous or downstairs for the more cautious who remained to be convinced about "such newfangled installations". In his own home, Ernie Allen demonstrated his ingenuity for he designed and installed a lift for his wife, the very first in Blakeney.<sup>28</sup>

In late May 1948, at a Ministry of Health Inquiry held in Blakeney, the Walsingham RDC applied for consent to borrow £525 to maintain partial water supplies in the village pending the installation of the Council's own system.<sup>29</sup> It was anticipated that this would be achieved within five years. The private water installation referred to was the work and property of Ernie Allen supplying 42 premises, using some 4,000 gallons a day. The Public Analyst declared the quality to be very satisfactory.

Many may well recall the water tower standing in the British Legion drift and although no longer there, the pipes laid by Ernie Allen to the houses nearby are still functioning today with Anglian Water flowing through them. What an accolade!

## Conclusions

Not a long Allen presence, essentially the generation that arrived and three more, four generations in all that experienced a period of significant change. Of the inns that had been open when they first arrived only two now survive. Beerhouses no longer exist and a new breed of hotels have appeared catering for a different clientele. For the blacksmiths it was



**Photograph 4. The site of the Allen family foundry with a close-up of the commemorative plaque above the shop entrance.**

even more telling. The nature of their trade had changed and they had to adapt in order to survive. At the end, Ernie Allen and Herbert Smith generally worked alone, employing extra help only when needed. Herbert certainly would not contemplate taking on apprentices.<sup>30</sup> When these two blacksmiths retired, that was the end of an era. All that remains to remind us of blacksmiths is a small plaque on the shop front of 'Stratton Long Marine' recognising the site of the Allen family foundry (Photograph 4).

If Kenneth Allen's maternal family are introduced into the equation, then the balance would be altered and extend back to the opening of the nineteenth century for his mother, Edith Digman, was the daughter of Alfred Digman master mariner. Her grandfather and great grandfather, both Henry Digmans, were seaman and fisherman respectively and the family appear to have been of eighteenth century Irish extraction. Edith had been a school mistress and with her knowledge Kenneth would have had an even greater awareness of Blakeney's past and the future it was facing. Nor would he have needed Domesday information, he was living it and unlike us, probably knew the answers.

It is a tribute to the enterprise and endeavour of the Allens that this account can conclude noting the legacy they have left the village. The King's Arms is still in existence, albeit as a Freehouse, and Kenneth Allen's researches on the history of the Glaven Ports, and Blakeney in particular, are safely deposited locally in the History Centre where it may be freely enjoyed by all.

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# Some Historically Significant Trees in Norfolk

by John White

*Synopsis: At first glance Norfolk may seem to be devoid of significant trees but this is certainly not true. There is a wealth of arboreal diversity and history equal to any other county in England; some of this diversity is explored in this paper.*

## Introduction

The slate for trees in Norfolk was wiped clean during the last Ice Age, thus about 14,000 years ago there were no trees in the county. Yet by the time the British Isles became separated from mainland Europe by rising sea levels around 6,000 years ago a small number of what we can call 'Native Species' were established throughout the region. Subsequently species were added to the tree flora, mostly 'Alien Species' introduced through human activities.

In the past two hundred years Norfolk appears again to have been extensively cleared of trees, but this time in favour of agricultural and military activities. Fortunately enough historically significant individuals do survive to give us a tangible living link with our past. Oak has most to tell us about our recent history with extant trees dating back almost 1000 years. While, the wood of elm was widely used in ancient times, sadly few specimens remain since the last outbreak of Dutch Elm Disease. However, Black Poplar\* is a tree for which this county is notable for there are more examples of this endangered species in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex than anywhere else in England.

## Native Species and Native Trees

Most native woody plant species arrived in the British Isles by natural progression northwards after the last ice age. This process began as the climate warmed up about 13,000 years ago and ended 6,000 years ago when melting ice caused sea levels to rise sufficiently to isolate the British Isles from continental Europe. This restricted the number of species of woody plants to qualify for native status to around 150 and trees in particular to only 33. Here the term a 'British Native Tree Species'

applies to the species as a whole and not to an individual plant.

In a strict sense a 'Native Tree' (as opposed to a 'Native Species') is a plant growing on a site it occupies naturally having never been moved artificially<sup>2</sup> and, moreover, it should have regenerated from only local British stock. Such authentic native plants include those found in ancient woodlands where there is no evidence of past modification, or ancient semi-natural woodlands where there has been continuous tree or coppice cover since before the year 1600.<sup>3</sup>

Using this strict definition only two or three species can claim to have 'Native Trees' in Norfolk. The problem is that plants growing outside these limited environments could have resulted from cross fertilisation by pollen from later imports of the same species. The products of such crosses would often be undetectable after many years except by DNA analysis of their genetic material. Economically genetic purity may not be significant, in fact 'corrupted' trees often have a very colourful background.

## Ancient woods in Norfolk

At the time of Domesday there was more woodland in Norfolk. Now, with so much lost to agriculture and plantation forestry, only 0.5% of the present land area can be classed as old woodland. Indeed, it is estimated that 75% of medieval woodland has disappeared.

There are many definitions of ancient woodland, but one that is widely used today recognises for practical reasons woods that were in existence in 1600 as the starting point, even though by this date considerable changes had already taken place. It is the one used in all English Nature documents and is therefore worth repeating:<sup>4</sup>

**Ancient Woodland:** Land that has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600AD and may be:

**Ancient Semi-natural Woodland:** Ancient

\*Footnote: In this paper the English and Scientific names follow White (2005)<sup>1</sup>

woodland sites that have retained the native tree and shrub cover that has not been planted, although it may have been managed by coppicing or felling and allowed to regenerate naturally.

**Ancient Replanted Woodland:** Ancient woodland sites where the original native tree cover has been felled and replaced by planting, usually with conifers and usually this century (20th century).

Many woodlands belonging to these two types can be found in Norfolk, fortunately some of the more important sites are now reserves owned and managed by English Nature and the Norfolk Wildlife Trust. A few examples together with OS Grid refs are given in the list below; the one in North Norfolk is in italics.

Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood TH140980  
 Foxley Wood TG049229  
 Wendling, Honey-pot Wood TF932142  
*Swanton Novers TG013320*  
 Wayland Wood TL924995

All of these sites contain areas of ancient semi-natural woodland mixed with ancient replanted woodland and, on a smaller scale, similar associations can be found in the parishes of both Holt and Cley. However, many of the ancient woodlands in Norfolk belong to the replanted type, such as Hindolveston Great Wood and, in the Glaven Valley, Pereers Wood.

It must be remembered, however, that ancient or veteran trees are found in areas that are not considered woodland. An excellent example in North Norfolk is the Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT) reserve at Thursford Wood (TF979333) that is described as ancient wood pasture with some old oaks that are over 500 years old.

## Alien Trees

There are few places in the world where introduced trees play a more important role than in Britain. In Norfolk, even though it lacks a high rainfall, there is as rich and diverse tree flora as in any other part of the country, with over 2000 species and many more varieties of tree now growing in the county. Some alien species have become so familiar that it is difficult to regard them as introduced. A few, such as Sycamore and Horse Chestnut, have adapted themselves to the British climate and soil so well that they have become naturalized and taken on the superficial appearance of

native species.

## Veteran Trees

Veteran trees are living testaments of history, besides being picturesque additions to the landscape. In addition they provide obvious benefits in helping to maintain a diversity of wildlife. However, much of this history was never recorded or has been lost over time. Yet these trees still retain a special meaning and mystery as the only living link we have with the distant past and our ancestors.

Veteran trees may be large or 'over mature' trees, but they have such diverse range of forms that a simple definition of what should be regarded as 'a veteran' is not possible. Each individual must be assessed on its own merits. Age is important, but how old is old? It depends very much on the species and the place where the tree is growing. An ancient beech will only ever reach a fraction of the age of a similar sized ancient oak. A hillside rowan will be older than a comparable city park rowan. So size too is of little help in resolving this matter. Certainly veteran oaks can be enormous, but no larger than a redwood that was only introduced from America after 1853. Authentic veteran holly, field maple, thorns or mulberry trees of enormous age will always be smaller than oak or redwood. However, it must also be remembered that a small stunted tree growing under adverse conditions may be the oldest of the lot!

Usually a veteran tree is one that is past maturity and in decline. In oak this means heavy branches will be dying back or falling off, and a new shorter twiggy crown will be forming. Oaks with burrs (woody lumps of stem regrowth) are the most likely trees to do this and survive longest. Such specimens become a vital lifeline for saproxylic\* invertebrates and endophytic\* fungi. Eventually epiphytic\* plants will take root on their rotting stems and dead wood. Trees that are richest in such plants and animals are often species that take a long time to die; oak may take four hundred years, whereas birch may take only twenty.

## Local benchmarks for dating trees

In order to determine the age of old trees that are too precious to be damaged by drilling of any sort a method of estimating a date of origin has been devised that compares species, site and condition with other trees of known planting date. This depends on detailed knowledge of how a tree grows.<sup>5</sup>

Understanding the history of a tree depends to a large extent on knowing its age, but most veteran trees soon outlive any documentary evidence about planting and early management.

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\*Editor's footnote: saproxylic = living on or in rotting wood; endophytic = living within another plant; epiphytic = living on another plant.



**Photograph 1. The oldest living oak at Holkham from 1580. (Tree 63 in the park to the north of King George's Plantation).**

Nevertheless, several estates in Norfolk such as Kimberly, Oxborough and Felbrigg have valuable historical records, but none as comprehensive as Holkham Hall. Several extant trees are marked on the earliest surviving maps of this estate surveyed by Biederman, in about 1781.<sup>6</sup> Some of these trees were planted at least 200 years earlier and are probably old boundary and hedgerow specimens that predate the park. A more familiar outline of woods and belts at Holkham appears on the 1796 map published by William Faden, Geographer to King George III. By the time of the 1836 Ordnance Survey (OS) map Holkham Park had developed to virtually its present state.

Comparisons of the earlier maps and subsequent OS maps has verified planting dates in the Estate records, while cut stumps and fallen trees have enabled ring counts to be carried out to ascertain precise ages for most of the main periods of planting. These go back to a time before 1734, and are not related to Kent's mansion. Then there is a period from the building of the Hall (1734) to 1775, including William Kent's 'clumps'. Followed by the 'John Sandys

Period\*\* from 1775 to 1836, and finally 1836 to 1904 covering the activities of the Second Earl of Leicester.<sup>7</sup>

The park contains beech trees dated from 1754 to 1820, notably a plantation on Howe Hill (1781) and Sir John's Belt (1754). Planting dates for oak woods are recorded from 1794 to 1870 and to the present day. The Lombardy Poplars planted in 1785-7 are probably the earliest authentic record of a planting date for this species in Britain. A 'Willow Clump' was established in 1797 and vestiges of the same willows

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\* Walpole, who was a great admirer of Kent commented that: "Mr Kent's passion for clumps – that is sticking a dozen trees here and there till a lawn looks like the ten of spades. Clumps have their beauty; but in a great extent of country, how trifling to scatter arbours, where you should spread forest."<sup>7</sup>

\*\* John Sandys was a nurseryman of Wells who supplied and supervised the planting of many of the Holkham trees.



**Photograph 2. Kett's Oak or Oak of Reformation on Mousehold Heath.** Copyright Norfolk County Council

remain.

## Individual Trees and Species

### Lost but not forgotten, The Bale Oak

(probably *Quercus robur*)

Norfolk has one of the best and rare examples in England of the history of a tree surviving for longer than the tree itself. The legendary Bale Oak lives on in the minds of local people 144 years after it was cut down. It is said that some of the hedgerow trees nearby were grown from acorns of this tree and that furniture was even made from salvaged wood. The Bale Oak was a remarkable specimen, it began to die in 1795 and by the time it was cut down and measured in 1860 it was a branchless and leafless hollow trunk that had even been used as a cobblers shop and a pigsty. It would be interesting to know what tools were used to cut through such a large specimen, but the wood was carted off with much festivity to Cranmer Hall, Sculthorpe.<sup>8</sup> However, the Evergreen Oaks now growing around the site belong to a species introduced from south-west Europe in the sixteenth century and have nothing to do with the original tree.

It would appear the Bale Oak, and others adjacent to it, were always venerated, protected and nurtured, as the Celtic name for Bale means 'a sacred grove'. It is likely that growing conditions were always good, so the estimation of age is based upon the fastest growth category

of oak recorded in England to give a minimum estimate for the age of the tree – it may have been older. The mean radius of the stem when cut down was about 175 cm., with a massive stump area of over 9.5 sq.m.. The estimated age of a stem this size is 912 years. However the tree was severely pollarded (all the branches cut off) in 1795 and it probably never recovered sufficiently to increase its size subsequently, so the estimated age should refer to that year for calculating the starting date. Thus a tree 912 years old in 1795 started growing in the year 883 AD, in the reign of King Alfred!

### Kett's Oaks (*Quercus robur*)

Amongst some of the best-known trees in the county are the two surviving Kett's Oaks. A third reported to be on Mousehold Heath appears to no longer exist and no information on its size has been found. These trees, often called 'Oaks of Reformation', are reputed to mark the places where the followers of Robert Kett gathered and dispensed justice in 1549.\*

Over many centuries the central issues of the Rebellion have resonated with succeeding generations, grievances associated with, for example, loss of common rights and land,

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\*Editor's Footnote: At least 1 or 2 people from Blakeney and Wiveton joined the Rebellion. (Rutledge, E 44. Kett's Rebellion, in Wade-Martins, P *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk* 1994)



**Photograph 3. Ryston Kett's Oak: a 300 year old Ryston oak showing how Kett's Oak would have appeared in 1549.**

destruction of religious buildings and improving the lot of the labouring classes.<sup>9</sup> It is hardly surprising therefore that 'Kett's Rebellion' has evoked interest and sympathy and that these trees have been absorbed into local mythology. Although, the historical evidence for linking these trees with the ill fated 'Rebellion' may be questioned, that is not the issue here, rather it is the history of the individual trees.

### **Ryston Kett's Oak**

(TF 627 006 access restricted)

The tree at Ryston is probably the only surviving specimen where the chances of this tree being authentic are good. It is very large and clearly a veteran by the standards of English Nature and The Ancient Tree Forum.<sup>10</sup> There are old measurements too, for example it had a 232 cm diameter in 1906, but now it is 263cm at its narrowest point (measured 2004) giving a basal area of 5.4 sq.m.. Using comparative data from oak trees growing under 'Average Parkland' conditions the age is estimated to be 757 years, thus it started growing in 1247 during the reign of Henry III.

A tree selected as a meeting place by Kett's followers would almost certainly have been a dominant feature in the landscape and probably

well known to many people. It was probably growing in comparative isolation, easily seen from the surrounding countryside and along the fen edge. In 1549, this tree would have been 302 years old, its stem is estimated to have been almost 158cm diameter with a basal area of 1.6 sq.m. (using the same 'Average Parkland' category). The massive branch scars and stubs still visible on the stem today suggest that it would have had a large wide spreading crown.

There are several park trees still growing near Ryston Hall that more or less match this size and age. They show clearly what Kett's Oak must have been like in 1549. Although the crown would probably be starting to break due to exposure, its height would have been in the region of 20-28 metres, the current maximum height for 300 year old oaks on this site. The height now after a further 455 years of sustained battering is only 14 metres.

### **Wymondham Kett's Oak (TG 139 036)**

Although this far better known tree is called the Wymondham Kett's Oak, it is actually in the neighbouring parish of Hethersett, nevertheless this tree is also reputed to mark another of the spots where he gathered his followers. Certainly the Rebellion started in this area and Kett is

recorded as living in Wymondham. While wider grievances attracted people to his cause there were local issues and frictions centred on the enclosure of common land and the determination of the Reformation Commissioners to pull down monastic buildings at Wymondham.

It may be reasonable to assume that the tree under which the rebels met was growing on common land, perhaps in as bleak a situation as it is today, close to the old highway from London to Norwich. As in the case of the Ryston tree, it was probably a conspicuous feature visible from many directions. This would have meant that in 1549 it was a mature tree, for oaks of this species (*Quercus robur*) this is reached in 70-100 years, perhaps longer here on the Central Norfolk Clays.

This tree is very much smaller than the Ryston example having a stem diameter of only 113cm (measured 2001) giving a basal area of about one sq.m.. Using the slowest known growth category for estimating the age of oaks in the British Isles, this would date the tree back to 1574 some 25 years after the Rebellion. But employing the same estimation procedure as at Ryston it only dates back to around 1800.

Today the trunk is filled with concrete and there are no signs of a much larger stump or older root system from which a later tree could have developed, but much of this could have been removed in 1933 when the tree was 'repaired' and concrete was added.<sup>11</sup> So whether the tree we see today could be the actual tree under which Robert Kett gathered his men must be open to question given the above calculations.

It would seem there are three alternative options to consider:

1. The tree has indeed grown more slowly than any other recorded oak in lowland England and really is Kett's tree.
2. The original was destroyed, perhaps by the 'gentry' out of spite or fear, soon after 1549, but acorns were saved and grown by local supporters of Robert Kett and planted out much later on.
3. The existing tree simply commemorates the place and the event and was planted to replace the original. It may be of unknown origin and not the progeny of the original tree.

#### **Common or English Oak (*Quercus robur*): Veterans in Norfolk**

Common or English Oak is the commonest historically-interesting tree in Norfolk, not least because it can live for such a long time. The soils and climate also favour oak climax woodland that once extended across much of the County, except for the most boggy areas. It is also a species that survives in close proximity to the sea because it can withstand salt-laden

winds and salinity in the soil.

Oak has always been prized as a valuable timber tree as shown below in a graphic and detailed account by J Evelyn<sup>12</sup> of a timber sale in the county around 276 years ago – little has changed!

*“There were in 1636, an hundred Timber-trees of Oak, growing on fome Grounds belonging then to Thomas Daye of Scopleton, in the County of Norfolk, Efq; which were that year fold to one Rob. Bowgeon of Hingham, in the fed County, for 100 l, which Price was believed to be equal, if not to furmout, their intrinfic Worth and Value; for, after Agreement made for them, a Refufal happening (which continued the Trees ftanding till the Year 1671.) thofe very Trees were fold to Tho. Ellys of Windham (Timber mafter) and one Hen. Morley, Carpenter, by Mr Daye (Son of the faid Thomas Daye, Efq;) for 560 l. And this comes to me attested under the Hand of ‘Squire Day himfelf, dated 4 May 1678”.*

[Editor's note: It will be easier to read this account if you substitute s for f and pound currency for l]

Many of the oldest living oak trees in the County today date back to the time of the Black Death when the agricultural workforce was decimated and trees were able to grow on neglected land. The largest trunk on the Bayfield Estate dates back to 1346. It is likely that many other trees near it are of similar age. Two huge stems in the wood pasture at Kimberly Estate are 243cm and 248cm in diameter and date back to 1373 and 1380.

Sixteenth century 'Elizabethan Oaks' are still frequent in the County and research into these trees has been greatly assisted by the records held at the Kimberly Estate. Furthermore, cut wood and stumps around this Estate showing annual growth rings have provided precise data on which all the local age calculations have been based. In the year 2000 some of the so-called 'Elizabethan Oaks' in the park had an average age of 486 years (1514) and thus were actually planted in Henry VIII's time before Elizabeth became Queen. Another landmark tree nearby with a 199cm mean stem diameter is estimated to have originated in 1571 and some of the trees in the wood pasture were planted between 1571 and 1579. Later individuals in the Wood Pasture Field and Downham Lodge Field date back to the time of James I (1621).

'Elizabethan Oaks' also occur at many other locations in Norfolk including Sandringham, Oxborough, Sheringham Park and even on the military battle training area at Stanford, where they are probably better protected than anywhere else. Almost without exception the surviv-



**Photograph 4. Bayfield Oak dated to 1346.**

ing trees in this age group only remain in place by default as they are commercially useless and in the past, before chainsaws were invented, were too big to be worth cutting down.

The era of the true English Oak in England ended abruptly in the seventeenth century because of possibly the earliest recorded case of 'genetic pollution'. James I imported vast quantities of acorns from France to 'improve' his woodlands, so any 'English' oak planted from around 1610 onwards may not be English at all. It is known, for example, that around that time two chests of French acorns were planted in the heartland of English oak, Windsor Great Park.<sup>13</sup> So by now Anglo-French hybrids could have spread throughout the land.

#### **Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*)**

This alternative English Oak is generally associated with rocky upland sites in the British Isles. It is not common in Norfolk and contrary to popular belief it will seldom hybridise with Common Oak. It is often a straight stemmed tree with multiple up-swept branches, but not invariably so.

There are occasional examples in Norfolk scattered amongst Common Oaks, probably the best tree of the upright form is at Holt Hall. It

has a stem diameter of 170cm (2002) and is in the region of 340 years old, planted in the reign of Charles II. The oldest found so far in the County, which has the more twisted Common Oak form, is at Felbrigg on the track from the house to the lake. Its stem is 728cm in girth (232cm diameter) and it is estimated to date back to 1507 (Henry VII). Nearby slightly smaller trees of the same species and form date back to around 1646.

#### **Evergreen or Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*)**

Until recent climate changes began to take effect in Britain thriving Holm oak trees were mostly confined to Devon and Cornwall and just the mild coastal fringes of the British Isles. Occasionally trees survived in mild urban micro-climates.

In Norfolk, Holkham is a stronghold of Holm Oak or 'Ilex' as it is known locally. It is said that the first trees arrived as stray acorns in the packing around Italian marble used to decorate the great hall when the house was built between 1734 and 1764. The oldest specimens in the park certainly date back to that period and the provenance of the oldest extant trees does support an Italian origin. To this day additional

plants continue to be added to the collection by The Earl of Leicester.

#### **Turkey Oak** (*Quercus cerris*)

This fine looking but commercially useless timber tree was introduced from Asia Minor in 1735 and grows very well in the County. There is a giant specimen, possibly from the original introduction, in the garden at Blickling and another very good example at 'The Walks' in Kings Lynn.

#### **Sweet Chestnut** (*Castanea sativa*)

The acid sands and gravel of North Norfolk suit this species very well. Its origin in Britain is said to date back to the Romans, but charcoal at an archaeological site in Southern England suggests an earlier presence. Most of the big trees in our region are seventeenth century, but a large clump in Holt Hall woods, if it is all one tree, may date back to 1034, i.e. pre Norman Conquest. Large timbers were used but they tend to be of poor quality and prone to splitting. Small split logs were, and still are, used for fencing. The wood is durable when used out of doors without treatment with artificial preservatives.

#### **Ash** (*Fraxinus excelsior*)

This is not a common hedgerow tree in arable country because in the past its shallow roots trapped horse drawn ploughshares that could seldom be recovered. It is also a light demanding tree that does not thrive in dense woodland. However, the strong pliable wood was valuable for farmers, so trees were traditionally pollarded to obtain a sustainable supply of small flexible poles.

There is an interesting fifteenth century reference from the Dean and Chapter Rolls of Norwich Cathedral which states that men were paid to plant ash trees in hedges at Hindringham and Gately that were 'pulled up' in Hindolveston Wood. Earlier in 1297-8 new boundary banks, amounting to four miles, had been constructed at Hindolveston Wood for Norwich Cathedral Priory.<sup>14</sup>

#### **Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica*)

The native status of beech in Norfolk is the subject of much argument. The County is on or just beyond the natural range of the species. However, large trees are frequent and in places such as Felbrigg and Blickling they are as old and as large as beech gets, but many have fallen in recent gales. One of the finest is on the lawn at Bayfield House where it was planted in 1741. Three hundred years is exceptional for a beech tree. Traditionally trees were pollarded to produce small poles that could be split into four and turned on a pole lathe to produce table and chair legs.

#### **Plane** (*Platanus* species)

London plane (*P. x hispanica*) is a hybrid that probably arose in the seventeenth century. It is a common tree dominating many of the urban parks in the County. At Kimberley, adjacent to the walled garden, there are three very large examples of this hybrid with 137, 204 and 168cm stem diameters in 1999. The estimated age of a mean of these is 198 years, indicating they were planted about 1802. Trees of similar size and age can be seen in the Ryston Hall Gardens where the tallest tops 34 metres.

Much less frequent is the Oriental Plane (*Platanus orientalis*). There are good trees in Kings Lynn and a splendid layering specimen covering a huge area in the garden at Blickling.

#### **Common Lime** (*Tilia x europaea*)

This Lime is usually planted as an avenue tree, but infrequently in Norfolk although there is a short avenue at Kimberley dated to 1802. It is generally recognized by dense twiggy epicormic growth at the base or up the stem.

#### **Large-leaved Lime** (*Tilia platyphyllos*)

A tree near Binham Priory is interesting not for its great size and age but because of its origin. It is the southern form of the species (*Tilia platyphyllos* subspecies *pseudorubra*) from the Ukraine and Romania. At Kimberley south of the house there is an impressive lime of the British native form thought to be 243 years old (1757), an age which fits nicely into the period when 'Mr (Capability) Brown' was landscaping the estate.

#### **Small-leaved Lime** (*Tilia cordata*)

Hockering Wood is the third largest lime wood in the British Isles.<sup>15</sup> For a time in prehistory when the climate was mild this species was the commonest tree in lowland England. It has been coppiced regularly, which prolongs the life of the plant. So it is likely that some extant plants may have originated over 1000 years ago, even possibly 6000 years ago when the species arrived in the region naturally from continental Europe. The largest individual stem in Britain, 184cm diameter, is at Haveringland Hall (OS grid ref.: TG 154 214).

In Roman times, and possibly earlier, this was known as the tree of a thousand uses, most important was the 'bast' or inner bark that could be processed into a coarse fibre for making rope, besom ties, fishing nets and rough cloth. Lime charcoal was the best for artists and it made excellent gunpowder. Grinling Gibbons preferred the soft, even-grained wood in the seventeenth century for wood carving. Since then it has been used for toy making, hat blocks, bobbins, beehive frames domestic utensils and plywood.<sup>16</sup>



**Photograph 5. Working Small-leaved Lime coppice.**

### **Field Maple and Hawthorn**

*(Acer campestre & Crataegus monogyna)*

Ancient hedgerow trees abound in Norfolk. They are not spectacular so most of them are overlooked. Relict hedgerow hawthorns at Holkham suggest ages up to 500 years. Usually it is only possible to calculate age when broken stems reveal annual rings that can be counted. Even then there are problems, as exemplified by the hawthorns growing along the edge of the former saltmarsh at Wiveton. These trees probably date from the early 19th century, but they could be much older if they are growing on old rootstocks, even surviving from the time the harbour fell into disuse in the 16th or 17th centuries. A field maple stem at Kimberley with 92cm diameter at 40cm above ground is quite outstanding. At present, there are unfortunately no data for estimating field maple ages, but recent investigations of similar trees in Yorkshire suggest about 2-300 years, growing possibly on a much older rootstock.<sup>17</sup>

### **Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*)**

The ancient woodlands of Wayland and Swanton Novers are southern outposts of this north British native species.

### **Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*)**

The northern limit of native hornbeam is Sexton Wood (OS TM296915). There are fine old pollarded hornbeams at Burgh Heath Farm near Attleborough. They are probably relicts of ancient coppice coup (area to be cut in a particular year) boundaries, although they now stand in open farmland and pollarding has lapsed. It has been difficult to estimate the age of these trees because unfortunately this aspect of hornbeam has not been studied in detail.<sup>5</sup> So the top growth may be over 50 years old, but the rootstocks and bollings (stems) could in some instances be more than 5 times that age. One of the problems is that cut stumps of hornbeam are rare and they tend to decompose rapidly, which is perhaps unexpected in such a hard timber. Furthermore, even in the green wood the annual rings are not well defined.

Lapsed pollards of hornbeam, which may be defined as individuals not cut back for more than 13 years are notoriously difficult to re-work.<sup>14</sup> Although initial recovery after belated cutting may initially appear successful, mysteriously they decline and death can follow some years later.

It was common practice when pollarding to keep to a recognised timetable for cutting. Traditionally this was between St. Martin's Day



**Photograph 6. Hawthorns at Wiveton showing multiple stems growing from possibly an old rootstock.**

(11 November) and St. George's Day (23 April), but thought to be best towards the beginning rather than the end of this period.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Elms** (*Ulmus* species)

English Elm (*Ulmus minor* var. *vulgaris*) represents one of our most tangible links with the past. Except for its close relative, the small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*), it is the oldest living tree species we have in Britain. Forms of it were originally brought here by Bronze Age farmers between 3000 and 5000 years ago. They came from South East Europe where the tree is a native species.

Seed is seldom produced in Britain so it reproduces vegetatively, usually by suckering indefinitely from an extensive in-situ root system. This exceptionally long life is attributed to centuries of intensive management. By cutting hedges, cropping foliage for fodder, or harvesting timber, people have inadvertently rejuvenated the plant and stimulated it to grow and spread over and over again as if it was a young sapling. Historical references to elm hedge planting appear to begin in 1320 in Essex.

Although elm wood as such is seldom found on ancient archaeological sites, there is some evidence of elm being used for wheels of carts and chariots from the eighteenth dynasty in

Egypt (even though elm is not native to Egypt). Elm has also been identified on wetland sites in preserved boats, from ancient dug-out craft to late nineteenth century ships keels. Structural and domestic wood finds are common after the twelfth century. Piles, posts, pipes and coffins made of elm occur frequently, while wheel naves, chair seats, mallet heads and bows have also been identified. Medieval floor boards and long timbers occur as archaeological material and of course as components of extant buildings.

The naming of the different species and varieties of elm has suffered from excessive 'tinkering' and a huge number of cultivated forms have been developed. Some of the latter have had enough time to out-cross with native and different cultivated populations. The resulting confusion is difficult to unravel. In Norfolk there are two native species Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) and Smooth-leaved Elm (*Ulmus minor* subsp. *minor*), plus an endemic hybrid only found in East Anglia.

Since prehistoric times, when forest land was first converted to agriculture, elm trees have often been retained because of their value as producers of cattle-fodder, hard rot-resistant wood and bark products. Suckering species were cultivated as boundary hedges or for home-

stead shelter. So it is easy to understand the high regard in which country people held elms for it represented a locally available resource that was self-perpetuating with very little effort or expense.

So it is thought that people carried their favourite elms from place to place with them. This could account for the origin and spread of English Elm in Bronze Age England; this variety does not occur in adjacent areas of Continental Europe. Wych elm and Smooth-leaved elm on the other hand are native species in Britain and Europe. Their post-glacial occurrence in The British Isles was in the Mesolithic period some 7000 years ago. The East Anglian hybrid, which has dubious parentage, is also considered to be native in Britain.

Since the latest ravages of Dutch Elm Disease few mature trees remain in the County; a comprehensive map of these was produced in the 1990s by Norfolk County Council. The earliest recorded hint that elm was liable to catastrophic disease came in pollen records indicating 'Elm Decline' some 6000 years ago. In pre-history elm was a common species throughout Britain and Europe, but the evidence from fossil pollen during this decline suggests that the number of trees was reduced by half.<sup>15</sup>

Another disease of elm, until recently widely known and feared, is elm branch drop. So few large trees exist today that it has almost been forgotten. The condition is brought about by bacterial disease called 'wetwood' that can produce in the wood a build up of methane gas under pressure. Eventually, and without warning or outside provocation, structural timber ruptures and large branches will fall.

### **Dutch Elm Disease**

The theory that Dutch Elm Disease was a twentieth century phenomenon introduced from China that had no part in earlier declines in elm species has been disproved. There are records of dying elms in fifteenth century England. Deaths were reported at intervals again and again from 1658 onwards. After 1819 a serious outbreak of what was clearly Dutch Elm Disease occurred. Strangely though the disease was not even noticed in France until 1918. In the twentieth century the years 1927, when Dutch Elm Disease was first identified, 1936, 1965 and finally 1971 marked the start of new epidemics.<sup>19</sup>

Dutch Elm Disease is the result of a microscopic fungus (*Ostoma novo-ulmi*) interfering with the trees hormones and blocking vessels in the wood. A virulent strain began its fatal progression through England and Wales in 1971. It is no surprise that it started close to the ports of London, Tilbury, Southampton and Gloucester. Infected elm timber with the beetle-infested bark

still on was being imported to Britain from America through these ports at that time. It has been calculated that the disease then spread at about 8 miles a year until 1983, with the 'Bronze Age' clone of the English elm rapidly succumbing. This clone would have had a narrow range of genetic variation and it presents a graphic demonstration of the dangers in planting a population with a narrow genetic base.

The fungus is transmitted by two species of Scolytus bark beetles, but the fungus will also translocate through adjacent root systems of suckering species so a whole row of trees may succumb to a single attack. There is hope that some form of natural biological control will eventually suppress the disease, as it has done many times in the past.

### **Grey poplar (*Populus canescens*)**

The Poplar and Willow family, probably originated some 110 million years ago in the sub-tropical Northern Hemisphere, perhaps in the geological equivalent of the present day Euphrates basin.<sup>20</sup> Subsequent spread has been transglobal, mostly in the temperate and cold Northern Hemisphere, but only two species are native in the British Isles, the Aspen and the Black Poplar.

The Grey Poplar is a hybrid, but it is impossible to be certain whether clonal plants of this hybrid are native or introduced in Norfolk. The scarcity of trees in the district would suggest introduced. The status of Grey Poplar as a 'Native Species' in the rest of Britain is uncertain. One of its parents (White poplar) is not a British native species. It is a heat-loving tree better suited to its natural range along the Black Sea coast and Mediterranean region, but possibly in the warmer Atlantic Period (around 5000 years ago) it did thrive in Britain. If this is the case true native stock of Grey Poplar dates back to prehistoric times, as suckering plants may last virtually for ever, extant trees could have originated thousands of years ago!<sup>14</sup>

Except for limited numbers of experimental cultivated forms introduced after 1960, the last recorded 'new' introduction to Britain was in 1641.<sup>21</sup> Then 10,000 plants were imported from Holland probably for the production of sabots (wooden shoes) used in the Low Countries, France, Italy and Germany. The green unseasoned wood of Grey Poplar was, and still is, prized for this, but it is good for little else. Once established, stocks of trees are self-perpetuating and as propagation is difficult there has never been much incentive to produce any more.

Fine stands of Grey Poplar exist on the Bayfield estate, best of all is the small 'wood' along the River Glaven close to the Glandford bridge. Other extensive clumps occur in the County, notably in Broadland around Brundel.



**Photograph 7. Clump of Grey Poplar at Glandford; this is a single tree that has 'suckered' to produce this small wood.**

At Illington in South Norfolk one with a 93cm diameter stem is growing in a most curious position. Clearly it is a much-loved stem for it is in fact growing right through a tractor shed, with the roof being crafted round the stem to give ample room for expansion and no nails or screws have ever been driven into it. The roots complete with sucker shoots live in the moist soil outside.

#### **Aspen** (*Populus tremula*)

Another suckering slender-stemmed poplar, and one of the parents of the Grey Poplar, is Aspen. It is fairly rare in Norfolk probably because it co-hosts a disease of cereals and has been persistently rooted out by farmers. There is a good surviving clump with remarkably large stems at Baconsthorpe Castle.

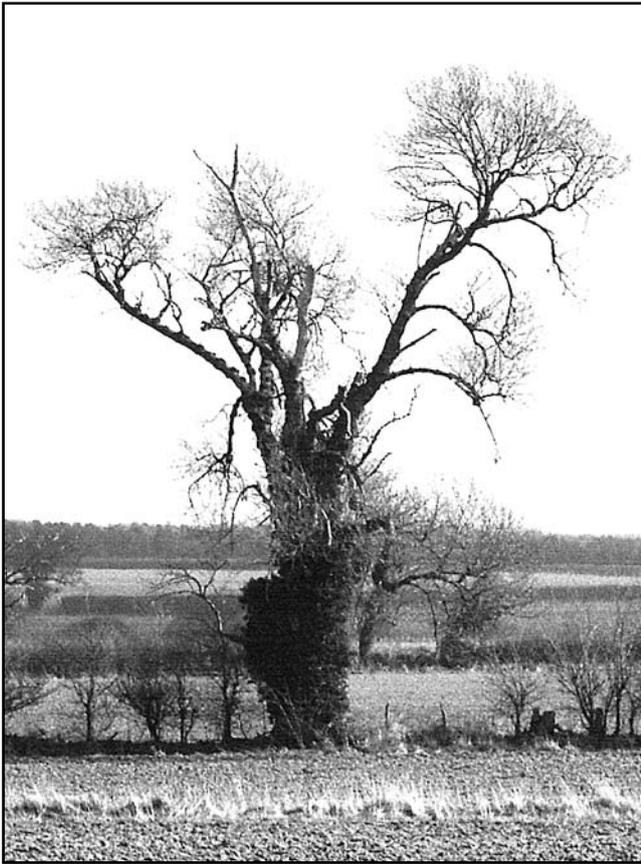
#### **Native Black Poplar** (*Populus nigra*)

Our native Black poplar in East Anglia is the Atlantic race of European Black Poplar (*Populus nigra* subspecies *betulifolia*), as a mature specimen in can be a spreading giant of a tree up to 30 metres tall and 20 metres wide. Positive morphological identification of the native subspecies is seldom easy and there are distinct variants to contend with. Positive identification is best achieved by 'genetic finger printing' based on

DNA.<sup>22</sup> At least four regional types are recognized. A distinctive feature is the foliage, samples are best inspected in early summer when the colour of young leaves as they emerge from the buds is a distinctive fresh green as opposed to bronze in many hybrid impostors.

Black Poplar is not a woodland tree.<sup>23</sup> So when the plains of the Old World (of which East Anglia is part) started being cleared for agriculture in Neolithic times, its numbers must have increased dramatically. Country people must have relied on it for fuel wood, shelter and low grade timber as no alternatives were available. Thus this fast growing poplar became a symbol of self-sufficiency and was dubbed *Arbor Populi*, the tree of the people. Later spongy shock resistant poplar wood was in great demand for industrial and domestic flooring and cart bottoms. It contains no volatile oils or resins so it would not ignite as readily as pine boards, a considerable advantage in the age of candles, oil lamps and open fires.

This tree is the most endangered native timber tree in Britain.<sup>23</sup> Only relict clumps and ancient individual trees are likely to be free of contamination by alien pollen from modern commercial plantations. A complete survey of the British population was undertaken by Edgar Milne-Redhead from 1973 to 1989.<sup>24</sup> He concluded that little or



**Photograph 8. Black Poplar at Langham**

no planting had taken place since 1850 when new hybrid poplar clones became popular. In 1975 only about 1000 standard trees were known in the British countryside. Even more alarming only about 6 female clones were found in the entire population (Black poplar trees are either male or female). Females were not usually planted in the nineteenth century because the seed fluff they produce spoiled some crops, such as strawberries.

In terms of historical and environmental interest this tree takes second place only to oak in Norfolk. The County holds one of the largest and most diverse stocks of old specimens in the British Isles. In 1998 the County Council published details of 72 live individuals and 29 dead trees for which historical records exist.<sup>25</sup> A huge tree once stood at Binham (TF 992 390). Two big trees at Grove Farm south of Langham have recently been discovered which may be cuttings from it, they are over 100 years old. The Council has undertaken an extensive and properly documented planting programme of trees grown from local cuttings. Only in Suffolk and East Wales are there comparable numbers with Norfolk. Large numbers of trees can be found in places such as Aylesbury Vale, Essex, Malvern, Shropshire and Greater Manchester, but they are mostly single or limited clone populations that are vulnerable to disease.

Early British records are scarce. In 1310 one John Petye was fined 2 shillings for felling a poplar tree. In 1422 an ancient and decayed tree was condemned for growing out too far over the King's Highway at Great Canfield in Essex.<sup>14</sup> In the eighteenth century entries in botanical works included scant reference to black poplar even Linnaeus tells us very little about it.<sup>26</sup> In the briefest of notes Threlkeld states under *Populus lybrica* the Asp-tree (aspens), "There is a sort of poplar called black".<sup>27</sup> The oldest recorded planting date appears to be 1715. John Constable painted Black Poplars fairly frequently and his pictorial records provide some of the best clues we have to the status of the tree in the landscape at the time.

Black Poplar was well known to Pliny who recommended it as a living support for vines.<sup>29</sup> In Roman mythology there is a fable relating to Phaeton who tried to drive the 'horses of the sun' for a day, but lost control of them. In order to avert a disaster Jupiter flung him from the chariot into the River Po where he was drowned. His sisters stood on the banks of the river dressed in black and trembling with grief, they became such a nuisance that they were turned into the first (black) poplar trees.

#### **Hybrid poplars in Britain.**

The history of modern poplar cultivation in Britain has been influenced greatly by the Norfolk family owners of the Ryston Estate near Downham Market. To this day some of the finest hybrid poplar timber in Europe is produced there with some of the wood being used to produce paper pulp. Many forms have been tested involving many clones and hybrids of American and European species.<sup>29</sup>

#### **Apples and Pears**

There is now an active research programme into old East Anglian varieties of apples and pears, including the development of an orchard and a propagation scheme for many of the old cultivars.<sup>30</sup>

One of the interesting apples is 'Dr. Harvey' which may be unique to East Anglia, but very few trees exist and many of these are old and decaying. It is not certain what the relationship is between this apple and the more familiar 'Harvy'. Although spelt differently this too is an old clone. Stem analysis of a 'Dr Harvey' tree at Blythburgh in Suffolk has provided useful information for estimating the age of trees growing in similar conditions. The 28cm diameter stem contained about 90 rings but the tree had reached maturity in only 40 years.

Using comparative data the size of ancient apple trees can be related to age. A stem 60cm in diameter suggests an age of 300 years and an old apple at Wiveton, possibly a 'Pineapple Russet', falls into this category. This is a most



**Photograph 9.** *The old apple tree at Wiveton, possibly 'Pineapple Russet'. The old trunk has split and collapsed; where branches touch the ground they have rooted.*

interesting variety for it is one of over 30 named varieties that are thought to have a Norfolk origin, but now listed as lost. Attempts are now being made to identify it, so it will be interesting to watch how these progress.<sup>31</sup>

The curious 'Robin Pear' appears to have some affinity with Norfolk that is not yet fully understood. There is an outstanding example with a stem some 90cm in diameter (not easily measurable due to dead ivy) growing near Attleborough. Without doubt this tree is one of the most unusual in the county. It is the largest of its type and has distinctive fruit.

### Conclusion and Acknowledgements

**A**lthough trees are fairly permanent landscape features it is surprising how easy it is to overlook them. No doubt more significant trees will be found in Norfolk nevertheless it would be a pity if we ever found them all and spoiled the magic of discovery.

The author would like to thank all the land-owners who take such good care of their trees and allow them to be measured, and hugged, from time to time.

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# “Lest We Forget”

## HMS Princess Victoria and war graves in North Norfolk Churchyards

*by Richard Jefferson*

*Synopsis: The chance discovery of the graves of three World War II Royal Navy seamen in Cley churchyard, all from a minelayer (converted from a pre-war car ferry), started a search for more information. H.M.S. Princess Victoria struck a mine near the mouth of the River Humber close to midnight on 18th May 1940 and sank within minutes with the loss of 37 lives. Only 9 of the casualties have known graves, and 7 of those are in Norfolk, the bodies being washed up on our North Norfolk coast a month later.*

### Introduction

On an overcast afternoon in early January 2004 I set out with a friend from Bath on a gentle perambulation through Cley. After looking around St Margaret's Church, we found ourselves across the road in the new churchyard. Round to the left near the hedge three graves were visible in an area that had recently been cleared of alexanders, brambles and young saplings (Photograph 2). They were of Royal Navy seaman who had all died on 18th May 1940 and two of the headstones mentioned H.M.S. Princess Victoria.

My friend, who is an expert on 20th century naval matters, said that he was certain HMS *Princess Victoria* was a very early roll-on roll-off car ferry that had been completed in 1939, but at the outbreak of war in September 1939 had been requisitioned by the Royal Navy and converted into a minelayer. Indeed he even had a 1/1200 model of it – all three inches long!

A few days later the following note from my friend arrived through the post: "*PRINCESS VICTORIA (111) B(uilt) 1939 Wm Denny & Bros., Dumbarton T(ons) 2197g.....1939 Apr. 21: Launched for the Stranraer-Larne route....A pioneer car carrier with stern shore ramp loading.... Cattle could be carried on lower deck forward..... July 5: delivered to Stranraer (photograph 1)..... Sept: the ship was ideal for minelaying and was taken over as soon as war broke out. Carried 244 mines via two stern chutes. Crew 120. She joined the First Minelaying Squadron based at port ZA = Scapa Flow, Scotland. She was then detached to Hull for mining in the Heligo(land) Bight.*"

1940 May 19 (May 18 is the correct date!): "At the entrance to the River Humber she struck a mine which opened four compartments. Sank with the loss of 36 (the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) database in 2004 stated 37 casualties). 85 survived." <sup>2</sup>

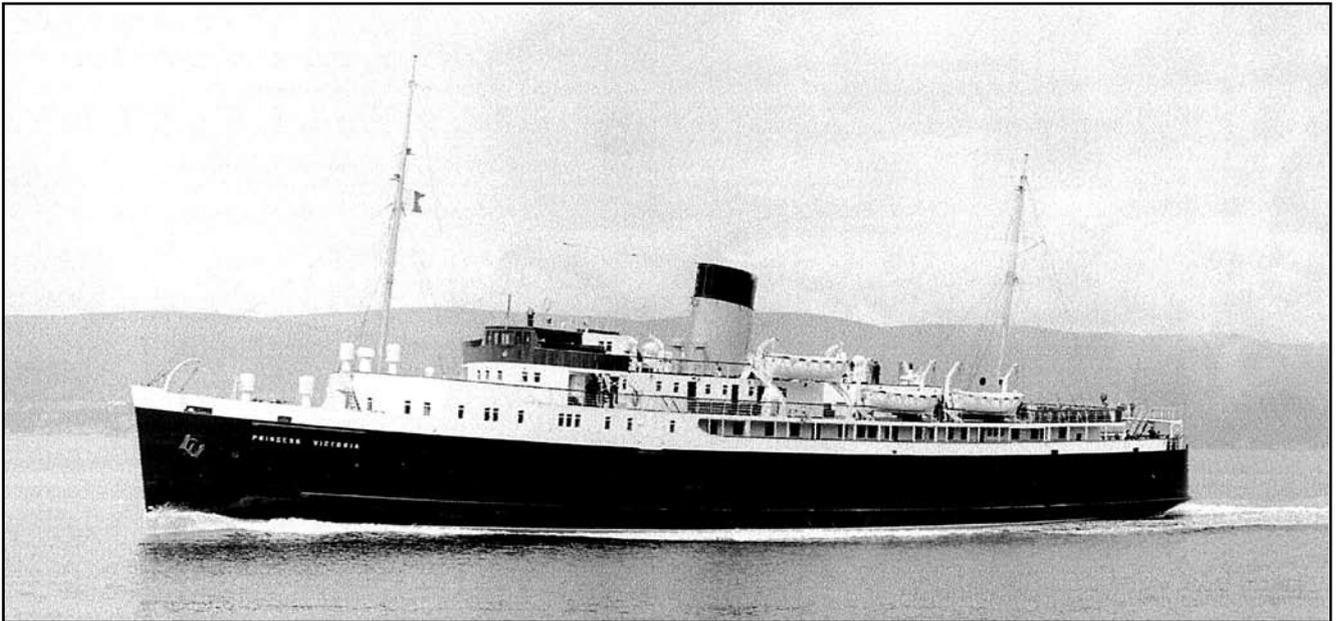
This *Princess Victoria* was the third out of a

line of four with the same name, all of which served as ferries on the Stranraer/Larne route. *Princess Victoria I* was built in 1890 and was sold in 1912. *Princess Victoria II* was built in 1912, saw service as a cross-channel troopship in World War I and was scrapped in 1934. *Princess Victoria IV* was built in 1946 as an almost identical rebuild of *III*. She sank in the Irish Sea during the terrible storm that caused massive devastation on 31st January 1953. There were 136 lives lost, some of whom had been rescued from the previous boat lost in the North Sea and had returned to work on the new ferry.<sup>2</sup>

### The Sinking of HMS *Princess Victoria*

A letter from the Ministry of Defence states that on the night of 18th May 1940 HMS *Princess Victoria* was returning to Immingham (Hull) after "laying mines in the East Coast barrier, some 40 miles east of Cromer"<sup>3</sup>, although in the report of the official enquiry into the loss of the ship it stated that the mines had been laid off the Dutch coast.<sup>4</sup> She was being escorted by two minelaying destroyers HMS *Ivanhoe* and HMS *Express*, after three other escort destroyers had been "dropped off at Harwich"<sup>5</sup> "At 23.15 there was a terrific explosion which appeared to come from below the ship and to the starboard side of the centre line, forward of the bridge. The ship had hit a magnetic mine, probably dropped by a German aircraft. After 20 to 30 seconds the ship was listing 45 degrees, and 70 degrees within about 2 minutes. She touched bottom and eventually sank on an approximately even keel, leaving her mast, funnel and part of the bridge structure exposed".<sup>1</sup>

The wreck lay in the main shipping lane and was, therefore, a considerable danger to other shipping. So in March 1944 it was partially dispersed with heavy explosives, leaving 8.5 metres of water clear above the wreck.<sup>6</sup> It was almost



**Photograph 1. mv Princess Victoria during sea trials in June 1939.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Reported discovery of Body</b>	<b>Date of Funeral</b>	<b>Cemetery</b>	<b>Note</b>
Lt.Cdr L A LAMBERT RN	37	First Lt	19 June: Sea off Sheringham	Jun 21	Sheringham	1
Unidentified RNVR Officer		(Possibly Naval Paymaster)	20 June: Beach, Upper Sheringham	Jun 21	Sheringham	2
Unidentified RN		Telegraphist	Beach, Weybourne	Jun 21	Salthouse	3
J W BURROWS OBE RN	21	Signalman	Beach, Salthouse	Jun 21	Salthouse	4
T DAVIDSON RN	20	Telegraphist	Washed ashore, Cley	Jun 22	Cley	1
T RICKETT RN		Ordinary Seaman	Washed ashore, Cley	Jun 22	Cley	
Unidentified Sailor			18(21) June: Beach, Blakeney	Jun 23	Blakeney	5
H F EVANS RN	43	Leading Signalman	Beach, Warham	Jun 23	Warham St Mary Magdalen	
J MITCHELL RN	19	Able Seaman	Washed ashore, Cley	Jun 24	Cley	6
Unidentified RAF			Beach, Upper Sheringham	Jun 24	Sheringham	7
D A SELF RN	19	Able Seaman	Sheringham Beach	Jun 25	Sheringham	

**Table 1.**

## Explanatory Notes for Table 1

**Note 1:** The gravestone for Lieut. Commander Lambert (Photograph 3) and that for Telegraphist Davidson in Cley (Photograph 6) were paid for by the family and may well have been erected soon after the burial. All other graves would initially have had wooden crosses that were replaced by CWGC headstones in the years after the war had ended.

**Note 2:** In this case Upper Sheringham probably means west of Sheringham. Looking at the list of RN/RNVR/RNR unidentified casualties and accepting what is written on the headstone, it is highly likely that this is the grave of Acting Sub-Lieutenant Harry Proudfoot RNR.<sup>9</sup>

**Note 3:** The CWGC headstone says "A Sailor of the Second World War A Telegraphist". The Rev. Charles Swainson in the Burial Register refers to "An unknown man, presumed to be a wireless operator, Naval Air Arm".<sup>11</sup> Looking at the CWGC casualty list it is highly likely that this is the grave of Leading Telegraphist F A Theobald.<sup>9</sup>

**Note 4:** There is some confusion about the spelling of the surname, whether it should be Burrows or Burroughs, but it must be recognised that this type of error occurs quite frequently in different types of records (Photograph 4). The award of an OBE to a 20 or 21 year old in 1940 must have been for something exceptional and thus can be considered a distinguishing feature that allows the surname issue to be resolved. It is recorded in the Supplement to the London Gazette<sup>12</sup> for 1st January 1940 under the heading 'Medal of the Military Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, for Meritorious Service' 'James W. Burroughs, Signalman, HMS *Vanquisher*'. The August and September 1939 Log Books for the destroyer HMS *Vanquisher* are missing, but the October Log Book stated that on 11th September the ship was in collision with another destroyer HMS *Walker*.<sup>13</sup> The latter's Log Book for September 14 showed that at 21.55hrs on 11 September the two ships collided in the Irish Sea. The ship's company of *Vanquisher* were transferred to *Walker* and the following morning the destroyer HMS *Ardent* took *Vanquisher* in tow to Devonport. A few days later *Walker*'s Log Book recorded the funerals of four crew members from *Vanquisher*. It seems highly likely that Burroughs 'meritorious service' was associated with this collision. Moreover, the citation in the London Gazette was published when he was alive and consequently the spelling of the surname is likely to have been correct. Consequently it would seem extremely likely the

correct spelling is Burroughs, but the CWGC will only alter their records if a copy of his birth certificate can be produced with the spelling 'Burroughs' and confirmation that this is the man buried in the grave, this might be quite a tortuous task.

**Note 5:** On Sunday 23rd June a funeral at St Nicholas Church, Blakeney, for an unidentified sailor was recorded in a local newspaper.<sup>15</sup> However, there is no record of this burial in the Church Burial Register, nor on the plans of the churchyard held by the churchwardens, nor surprisingly in the records of the CWGC. The death certificate (Photograph 7) states that a body was found on the beach at Blakeney on Tuesday 18th June,<sup>16</sup> but the newspaper report stated the body was washed up on Friday 21st June. In these accounts the references to Captain G F Weld Blundell RN enable some sense to be made of this confusion for he represented the Admiralty at the Sunday funeral in Blakeney and later registered the death on 11th October. So it would appear there was only one body, that of a Royal Navy sailor and almost certainly from HMS *Princess Victoria*.

**Note 6:** Poignantly on the gravestone of Able Seaman Jack Mitchell it is recorded that his youngest brother also died on active service in World War II (Photograph 8); he was a telegraphist on the cruiser HMS *Penelope* sunk on 18th February 1944 west of Naples (off Anzio) by U410, with the loss of 415 lives; there were 206 survivors.<sup>17</sup>

**Note 7:** The Eastern Evening News reported the funeral of an unknown seaman on Monday 24th June at Sheringham with the Royal Navy being represented by a Naval Captain.<sup>18</sup> However the Sheringham Urban District Council Notice of Interment tells a different story as it records that a body found on the beach at Upper Sheringham (west of Sheringham) was presumed to be a member of the RAF One needs to keep an open mind on all this. There is a CWGC headstone but this would not have been erected until five years after the end of the war, at the earliest. If it was a Naval person then it is highly likely to be another unidentified body from HMS *Princess Victoria*.



**Photograph 2. It was the discovery of these graves that started the search for the sinking of the Princess Victoria.**

totally dispersed in 1948 and now no more than 1.04 metres stands above the seabed giving a depth of water of about 12 metres.<sup>7</sup>

At the time of the explosion there were 17 officers and ratings either on the bridge, in the Chart House or in the Wireless/Telegraph Office. 12 of that number died.<sup>1</sup> The force of the explosion probably blew them off the ship into the sea where they drowned if they were not already dead. At least, some of their bodies were swept south down the North Sea by the tides and currents, to be washed up on the beaches of North Norfolk a month or so later. All these individuals were RN/RNVR/RNR.<sup>8\*</sup>

The 20 Naval Auxiliary Personnel (Merchant Navy) who died all worked below deck and were probably entombed when the ship sank. These were men who had been transferred to naval command and placed under King's Regulations when the Royal Navy requisitioned their merchant ship in 1939, so it included engine room officers together with crew, cooks and stewards. In this case 8 of the engine room crew were lost – the 5th Engineer Officer, 6 greasers and an engine room storekeeper, while 6 stewards and 3 cooks who were off duty and in their bunks on the lower deck would have been trapped. The remaining three were a boatswain, a carpenter and a donkeyman.<sup>9\*\*</sup>

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\* Footnote: RN = Royal Navy RNVR = Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve RNR = Royal Naval Reserve, who were serving members of the Merchant Navy who gave some of their time each year to train with the Royal Navy, and on the declaration of war were called up for service in the Royal Naval Reserve.

## Norfolk Burials

The relevant burial register for Cley still resides in the vestry of St Margaret's Church. It shows that two of the sailors, Thomas Davidson from Belfast and Thomas Rickett, from Rotherham, were buried on Saturday June 22nd and Jack Mitchell from Blackpool on the following Monday 24th June. There was also a note in the handwriting of Charles Toft, Rector: "These bodies were washed ashore at Cley from HMS *Princess Victoria*, a minelayer, which was mined at the mouth of the Humber on May 18th".<sup>10</sup>

What had started as a study of burials at Cley now uncovered much more. In the Local Studies Library in the Millennium Library at the Forum, Norwich an examination of the micro-films of local newspapers for June 1940 showed that other bodies from the same ship had been washed up along the North Norfolk coast and one had been found floating in the sea. This and other information gleaned from the Sheringham Urban District Council Notices of Interment and Register of Burials, church burial registers, and, in one case, a death certificate is summarised in the following tables and accompanying notes. However, this search has revealed that there is no record in the parish documents of a seaman being buried in Blakeney churchyard (see Note 5) and hence no CWGC gravestone marking his resting place.

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\*\*Footnote: donkeyman = crew member whose job was to operate steam engines, winches etc, not in the engine room.



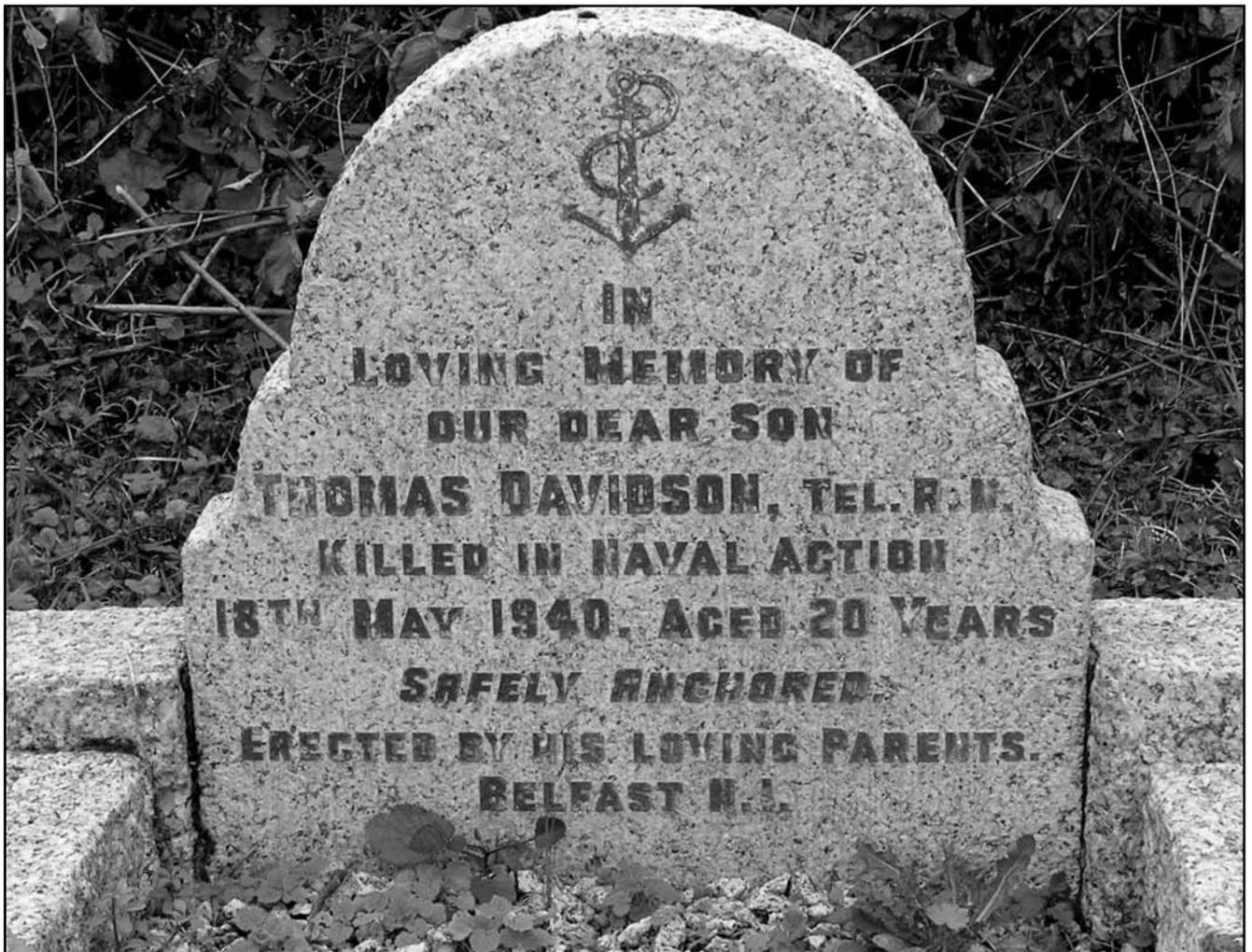
**Photograph 3. The grave of Lt Cmr Lambert in Sheringham cemetery.**



**Photograph 4. Grave of Signalman J W Burrows (Salhouse)**



**Photograph 5. Grave of Ordinary Seaman T Rickett (Cley)**



HC 749955


**CERTIFIED COPY of an ENTRY OF DEATH**  
**Pursuant to the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953**

**Registration District** *Fakenham*

**1940 . Death in the Sub-district of** *Wells* **in the County of** *Norfolk*

Columns: -									
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description, and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
90	<i>Dead body found on Eighteenth June 1940, on beach near Blakeney North Norfolk R.D</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>- years</i>	<i>Unknown</i>	<i>Due to war Operations</i>	<i>Certificate received from G. F. Weld Blundell, Officer Commanding</i>	<i>Eleventh October 1940</i>	<i>HC Copland Registrar.</i>

Certified to be a true copy of an entry in a register in my custody.
 

  
*Superintendent Registrar*


  
*7th May 2004 Date*

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. ©CROWN COPYRIGHT  
 WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.



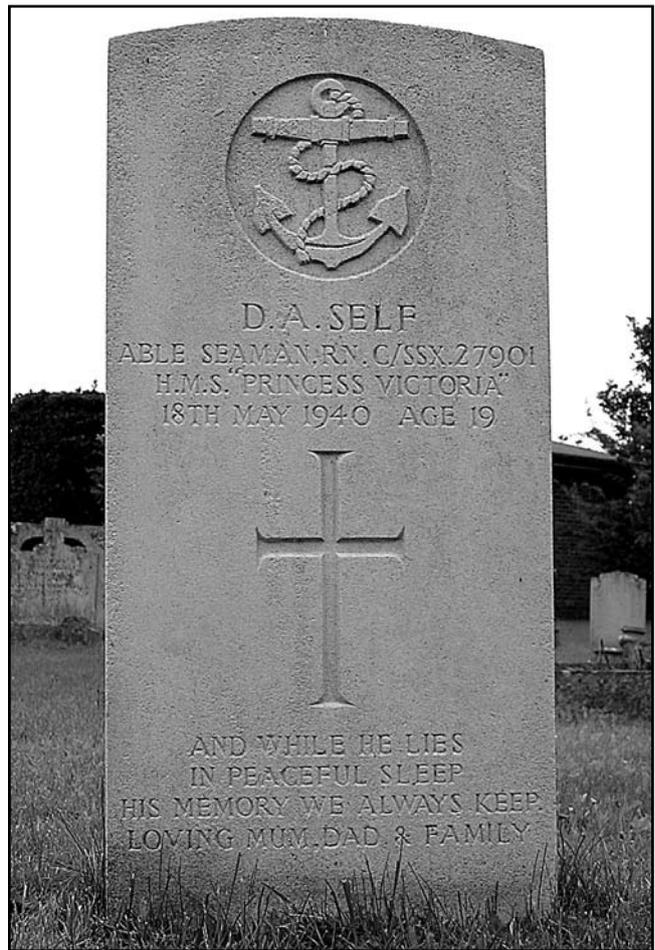
**Photograph 6 (top left). Grave of Telegraphist T Davidson RN, buried 22 June 1940 at Cley**

**Photograph 7 (lower left). Death Certificate of unknown sailor washed ashore near Blakeney**

**Photograph 8 (above left). Grave of Able Seaman J Mitchell RN, buried 25 June 1940 at Cley**

**Photograph 9 (above right). Grave of Able Seaman D A Self RN, buried 25 June 1940 at Sheringham**

**Photograph 10 (right). Grave of unknown officer of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, buried 21 June 1940 at Upper Sheringham. He is believed to have been Acting Sub-Lieutenant Harry Proudfoot, the Naval Paymaster aboard the Princess Victoria, though he is listed as RNR.**



## ROLL OF HONOUR

### H.M. MINELAYER PRINCESS VICTORIA

The Secretary of the Admiralty regrets to announce the following casualties, which occurred in H.M. Minelayer Princess Victoria:—

#### MISSING, PRESUMED DEAD

##### OFFICERS

Captain J. B. E. Hall, R.N.; 5th Engineer William Graham; Lieutenant-Commander L. A. Lambert, R.N.; Temporary Sub-Lieutenant (E) Harry Proudfoot, R.N.R.

##### RATINGS

Burrows, J. W., Sig.; Cockshutt, J. F., Ord. Sig., R.N.V.R.; Cookson, E. G. W., ord. smn.; Coupe-thwaite, I., carpenter; Darby, S. N., asst. steward; Davidson, T., teleg., R.N.V.R.; Dudley, S. W., asst. cook; Evans, H. F., Leadg. sig.; Flaherty, P., greaser; Little, A., donkeyman; Little, J., greaser; Logan, A. C., greaser; Lowther, L. C., greaser; MacDonald, A. H., asst. steward; MacKenzie, J., asst. steward; MacLean, I. G., 2nd cook; McCalmont, J., bosun; McIsaac, A., greaser; McNab, A., asst. steward; Mitchell, J., A.B.; Murray, F. T., greaser; O'Kelly, M. H., leadg. supply asst.; Parker, T. R., asst. steward; Rickett, T., ord. smn.; Robinson, W. J., engine-room stores; Self, D. A., A.B.; Scutt, W., ord. smn.; Snowling, F. H., C.P.O.; Theobald, F. A., leadg. teleg.; Underwood, W., chief steward; Wear, C. W., ord. smn.; Willats, P., chief cook.

#### WOUNDED

##### OFFICERS

Paymaster-Lieutenant F. A. K. Betty, R.N.V.R.; Lieutenant-Commander P. M. S. Chavasse, R.N.; Lieutenant F. B. Fisher, R.N.; Temporary Sub-Lieutenant W. D. Gray, R.N.R.; Temporary Sub-Lieutenant (E) E. R. Jones, R.N.R.; 7th Engineer G. W. Kinloch; Lieutenant H. A. Kirby, R.N.

##### RATINGS

Ford, O., ord. smn.; McMackland, D., P.O., R.N.V.R.; Sheldon, J., ord. smn.

Photograph 11. Roll of Honour in The Times 25 May 1940.



## Bodies Washed Ashore.

### FUNERALS ON NORFOLK COAST.

The funeral of Lt.-Commander Louis Alfred Lambert, R.N., and another man, believed to have been a Paymaster R.N.V.R., whose bodies were washed ashore at Sheringham took place at Sheringham cemetery on Friday with military honours.

Officers and men of H.M. Navy, Marines and Army followed the coffins and acted as bearers, and an Army bugler sounded the "Last Post."

Rev. J. F. Gratton Guinness (Vicar of Sheringham) officiated.

Among those present were: Major F. Harman (representing the British Legion and Sheringham U.D.C.), Inspector Levick, Mr. Trevor H. Bent (Clerk, Sheringham U.D.C.), and Councillor J. Pegg (representing the Salvation Army).

#### CLEY FUNERAL.

The interment of Able Seaman J. Mitchell, whose body was washed ashore at Cley, took place at Cley cemetery on Monday.

The funeral, which was quiet but impressive was attended by relatives of the deceased man, from Blackpool, and also present were District Officer Davies (Cromer) and Coast-guard J. C. Ling (Cley), representing the Admiralty.

Among the floral tributes were those from the family mourners, the Admiralty, Coastguards, inhabitants of Cley, and a small post which was simply inscribed "Thank you."

An unknown seaman, whose body had been washed ashore, was buried at Sheringham cemetery on Monday.

The Vicar (Rev. Gratton Guinness) officiated, and a Naval Captain was present.

On the coffin, which was draped with a Union Jack, was a wreath from the officers and men of the Royal Navy.

#### FUNERALS OF UNKNOWN SEAMEN.

A large congregation attended at St. Nicholas' Church, Blakeney, on Sunday, for the funeral service for an un-identified seaman, whose body had been washed ashore on Friday.

The Rev. E. Kinloch Jones conducted the service, and the coffin, covered by the Union Jack, was followed to the graveside by representatives of the British Legion, Defence Workers, and the Police.

Capt. G. F. Weld Blundall, R.N., represented the Admiralty.

The "Last Post" was sounded at the conclusion of the service.

Flowers were deposited on the coffin by sympathisers.

Photograph 12 (above). Entry from the Norfolk Chronicle, Friday 26 June 1940.

Photograph 13 (left). Marshall Leonard Skelton in Cley cemetery, 2004.



**Photograph 14. Photograph of Able Seaman Len Skelton minelaying.**

There are seven named graves of sailors from HMS Princess Victoria in North Norfolk, with almost certainly another three, and possibly four, unidentified sailors from the same ship. The CWGC database shows that there were 37 casualties,<sup>9</sup> of whom only nine have known graves. The two outside Norfolk are at Grimsby, Lincolnshire and Thorne, Yorkshire. The latter was the home town of the casualty, while the former was probably washed ashore off Grimsby. Seven casualties, Six RN and one RNVR, are commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial in Kent (Royal Navy Memorial), while one RNR and twenty Naval Auxiliary Personnel (Merchant Navy) are commemorated on the Liverpool Naval Memorial (Merchant Navy Memorial).<sup>9</sup>

The Roll of Honour published in *The Times* on 25th May 1940 (Photograph 11) is interesting. It shows that of the survivors only three ratings were wounded, while in contrast seven officers were. The report to the Admiralty from the senior surviving officer stated: "four of those saved were blown off the bridge. One landed near the funnel, two by the after gun and one was blown clean over the funnel and landed in the water between 20 and 30 yards astern. All received severe injuries. The fifth survivor was the Navigating Officer Lieutenant F.B. Fisher RN, a wooden cupboard was blown on top of him rendering him unconscious, but saving his life".<sup>1</sup>

Lieutenant-Commander P M B Chavasse, the senior surviving officer who submitted the official report to the Admiralty and was the main witness at the board of enquiry, was off duty on top of his bunk;<sup>1</sup> 7th Engineer Officer G W Kinloch was asleep on his bunk, but was injured when he made his escape through glass panels that he had to break.<sup>6</sup> It would seem that all the Officers that were off duty were probably in their bunks on an upper deck, while those on duty were on or near the bridge.

### Conclusion

There are a considerable number of questions that remain unanswered, and trying to wade through the evidence has been a minefield in itself. What is not in question is the sacrifice of so many of the young men who died to help secure our freedom, a surprising number of whom, from all the armed services, lie together, with those they fought, in our Norfolk churchyards and cemeteries.

### Postscript

In the course of this study two of the eighty-five survivors from HMS Princess Victoria have been traced (through the internet). Marshall Leonard Skelton (Able Seaman M L Skelton RN) is still alive aged 84. A week short of

his 19th birthday at the time of the sinking, he was on duty towards the stern and was able to get into the water.<sup>19</sup> In July 2004 he, with his son and grandson (Malcolm Skelton, who is doing a detailed study of all the crew and the sinking), came to North Norfolk and visited the graves of his former shipmates (Photograph 13).

Graham Wright Kinloch (7th Engineer Officer G W Kinloch, Merchant Navy, Naval Auxiliary Personnel) died in 2003 at the age of 88. In 1994 his son recorded him talking about his experiences on the HMS *Princess Victoria* and giving a detailed account of the sinking.<sup>5</sup>

## Table 2: List of events with extracts from original sources.

### Date of Event In 1940

#### 18 June Death Certificate:

“Dead body found on Eighteenth June 1940 on beach near Blakeney – due to war operations”

#### 19 June Sheringham Urban District Council Notice of Interment Lieut. Commander L.A.Lambert’s body “found in the sea off Sheringham”

#### 20 June Sheringham Urban District Council Notice of Interment “Body, believed to be a naval paymaster, found on the beach at Upper Sheringham”

#### 21 June St Nicholas Church, Salthouse: Burial Register 21 June 1940 No. 610 Signalman J.W.Burrows RN: “body washed ashore on Salthouse Beach – Charles Swainson, Rector” No. 611 “an unknown man, presumed to be a Wireless operator Naval Air Arm - Body washed ashore on Weybourne beach – Charles Swainson, Rector” (The CWGC headstone has: ‘A Sailor of the Second World War A Telegraphist Royal Navy’)

#### 21 June Eastern Daily Press Saturday 22nd June 1940 “With naval and military honours the funerals took place in Sheringham Cemetery yesterday of Lieut.Commander Louis Alfred Lambert, and of another naval officer, believed to be a paymaster. Both bodies were washed ashore at Sheringham earlier in the week. For each cortege there were six bearers from H.M.forces – four naval ratings, four marine corporals and four Army sergeants. The Vicar of Sheringham, the Rev. J.F.Gratton Guinness conducted the service. There were two wreaths, from Royal Naval personnel and a woman placed a vase of blue cornflowers between the graves.”

#### 21 June Eastern Daily Press Saturday 22nd June 1940 “Two naval ratings who had been washed ashore on the North Norfolk coast were buried at Salthouse with naval honours yesterday. Representatives of various bodies present included Messrs E.W.Algar and J.C.Ling of Cley Coastguards.”

#### 21 June Eastern Evening News Tuesday 25th June 1940 “The funeral took place on Sunday afternoon of the unidentified seaman whose body was found on Blakeney beach on Friday.”

#### 22 June St Margaret Church, Cley: Burial Register 22 June 1940 No.341 Thomas Rickett Rotherham 20 years No.342 Thomas Davidson Belfast 20 years (In the hand of Rev.Charles Toft, Rector: “These bodies were washed ashore at Cley from HMS *Princess Victoria* a minelayer which was mined at the mouth of the Humber on May 18th.”)

#### 23 June Norfolk Chronicle Friday 28th June 1940 “A large congregation attended St Nicholas’ Church, Blakeney, for the funeral service for an un-identified seaman, whose body had been washed ashore on Friday.. The Rev.E.Kinloch Jones conducted the service, and the coffin, covered by the Union Jack, was followed to the graveside by representatives of the British Legion, Defence Workers, and the Police. Capt.G.F.Weld Blundell RN represented the Admiralty. The ‘Last Post’ was sounded at the conclusion of the service. Flowers were deposited on the coffin by sympathisers.”

#### 23 June Norfolk Chronicle Friday 28th June 1940 “The funeral took place at St Mary’s Church, Warham, on Sunday of Leading Signalman Henry Francis Evans, aged 43, whose body was washed up on the beach at Warham. Deceased was a native of Poplar. He joined the Navy during the last war at the age of 16 and served 23 years. He was called up at the beginning of the present war.”

**23 June** Eastern Evening News Tuesday 25th June 1940

"The fourth body to be washed ashore at Sheringham within a week was recovered from the sea on Sunday. It is believed to be that of a Naval rating D.A.Belf A.B." ('Self' is the correct spelling of the surname. The Notice of Interment had the incorrect one, which the newspaper used for its article. The Register of Burials has the spelling 'Self', as does the CWGC headstone.)

**24 June** Eastern Evening News Tuesday 25th June 1940

"A posy bearing the inscription 'Thank you' was among the flowers at the funeral of Able Seaman J.Mitchell, aged 19 years, at Cley Cemetery yesterday. The seaman's body was washed ashore at Cley. In addition to relatives from Blackpool there were representatives of the Coastguard Service."

**24 June** Eastern Evening News Tuesday 25th June 1940

"The funeral took place at Sheringham yesterday of an unknown seaman whose body was washed ashore last week. The Royal Navy was represented by a Naval captain and there was a wreath from the officers and men of the Royal Navy. The service was conducted by the Vicar of Sheringham (the Rev.J.F.Gratton Guinness), and the coffin was covered with a Union Jack." (This is the body that the Notice of Interment 'presumed to be an airman' and the CWGC grave has as 'an Airman of the 1939-1945 War'.

**25 June** Sheringham Urban District Council Register of Burials

Presumed to be the body of D.A.Self Naval Seaman (Sheringham is a public cemetery, for merly run by the Urban District Council, now by Sheringham Town Council).

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**References:**

- 1 The National Archives (TNA) - ADM 1/10807: The report of the loss of H.M.S.Princess Victoria, submitted by Lieut.Commander P.M.B.Chavasse, from the Royal Naval Sick Quarters, Grimsby on 23rd May 1940
- 2 Haws D *Merchant Fleets No.26: Britain's Railway Steamers Scottish and Irish Companies.* 1994
- 3 Pers. comm. from the Ministry of Defence, Naval History Branch. 18th June 2004
- 4 TNA - ADM 1/10807: Minutes of the board of enquiry held on board His Majesty's Ship "Dryad" on Friday 28th June 1940 into the circumstances attending the loss of His Majesty's Ship "Princess Victoria" on Saturday 18th May 1940
- 5 Pers. comm. from Nicolas Kinloch Graham regarding his father: Memories of Wright Kinloch (1915-2003), recorded on Saturday 7th May 1994
- 6 Pers. comm. from the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office. 3rd June 2004
- 7 Young, R *The Comprehensive Guide to Shipwrecks of the North East Coast.* 2001
- 8 Pers. comm. from Christopher Bull. November 2004
- 9 Pers. comm. from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. 24th March 2004. Extract from the CWGC Database giving 37 casualties of HMS Princess Victoria
- 10 St Margaret's Church, Cley: Cley Church Burial Register 1908-2000
- 11 NRO - PD 23/5: St Nicholas Church, Salthouse: Salthouse Church Burial Register 1813-1996
- 12 TNA - ADM 53 - microfilm 932. January 1940 page 2
- 13 TNA - ADM 53 / 110926: The October 1939 Log Book for H.M.S.Vanquisher
- 14 TNA - ADM 53 / 111055: The September 1939 Log Book for H.M.S.Walker
- 15 *Norfolk Chronicle.* Friday 28th June 1940
- 16 Pers. comm. from the Superintendent Registrar, Fakenham. 7th May 2004
- 17 [www.Uboat.allies.html](http://www.Uboat.allies.html): H.M.S.Penelope
- 18 *Eastern Evening News.* Tuesday 25th June 1940
- 19 Pers. comm. from Malcolm Skelton regarding his interviews with his grandfather Marshall Leonard Skelton in 2004

# A Snapshot of Blakeney Haven in 1565

## A Survey of the Ports, Creeks and Landing Places of Norfolk

*by John Peake*

*Synopsis: Churches surrounding Blakeney Haven are rich in ship graffiti, much of it probably dating from the 15th and 16th centuries and later. The community who produced these drawings is explored using a 1565 Survey of the ports, creeks and landing places in Norfolk.*

### Introduction

Grffiti is found in many churches and cathedrals scattered across the British Isles. Some is well known, but here in the churches surrounding Blakeney Haven, from Stiffkey in the west to Salthouse in the east and inland to Cockthorpe, there is a wealth of images that are largely unrecognised outside the local community.

This local graffiti is strong in representations of ships that would appear to date from at least the 15th and 16th centuries and possibly earlier,<sup>1</sup> plus many examples spread across successive centuries. These 'drawings' vary from simple outlines to more complex forms showing details of both hulls and rigging (Photograph 1). It is this detail that leads to the conclusion that the people who produced these works were closely involved with ships.

Whilst this graffiti may not have any great artistic merit, it does have considerable cultural interest in terms of its potential to extend our knowledge of both the vessels using the Haven and the local communities

It was against this background that the discovery of a transcript of a document in the Norfolk Record Office entitled 'A Survey of the Ports, Creeks and Landing Places of Norfolk, 1565' was of immediate interest. The original document is incorporated into the State Papers in the Public Record Office that is now part of the National Archives at Kew. The transcription used here was made by the Public Record Office.<sup>2</sup>

Even though many authors have already used this and similar surveys as sources of information on shipping and trade, here was an opportunity to take another look at a single snapshot of the Haven in the hope that it would provide a greater insight into the community who produced the graffiti.

### Surveys of Ports: Background

During the 15th and 16th centuries numerous surveys of shipping were made by the Crown to determine the number and size of merchant ships that could be pressed into service for the Navy.<sup>3</sup> Yet the underlying factors that governed the collection of data for many of the earlier surveys are difficult to comprehend and their value at a local level is compromised.

However, during the reign of Elizabeth the quality of the data expanded enormously as the frequency of surveys increased and more detailed information was included.<sup>3&4</sup> Consequently the government knew how many merchant or fishing vessels were available to act as tenders and transporters or as fighting auxiliaries, together with numbers of potential crew members to man them. Furthermore, it was possible for the authorities to monitor the success of legislation designed to encourage the development of English shipping.

The 1565 Survey was one of these reviews, but it fell within a period that was crucial for East Anglian trade. Between 1550 and 1569 trade with the Low Countries was flourishing, although the vessels trading between the two areas were predominately Dutch rather than English. Smuggling was also prevalent and attacks from pirates operating on the high seas were a constant threat. Yet links with Antwerp and Amsterdam and other ports, sometimes via Yarmouth, facilitated a 'super highway' for goods, corn going out and a wide diversity of materials coming in from ports that were much closer to East Anglia than London. This highway gave Norfolk access to specialist items from the continent, such as fine cloths and wine and spices from the Far East. However, much of this trade suddenly stopped in 1569, and later when it did resume English vessels and merchants



**Photograph 1. Example of ship graffiti from nave of Blakeney Church (15cm wide). This 'drawing' is on a flat surface although it extends onto a domed area above that is demarcated by a mason's line running across the picture. A line of mortar is clearly visible beneath the hull.**

**This is a three-masted vessel with a prominent beak and a bowsprit at the prow and indications of rigging. On the main mast there is clearly a top (a crow's nest is the nearest modern equivalent) and the wavy line above suggests a pennant. The fore mast also appears to have a top. Both these masts have horizontal spars with zigzag lines representing furled sails. There is a mizzen mast with a line running to it with another zig-zag line indicating a furled sail.**

**Many features of this vessel are reminiscent of the carved pew end from St Nicholas Church, Kings Lynn now preserved in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The carving shows a ship with sails furled resting on the sea with representation of fish swimming beneath it and dated about 1415. While such a date cannot be transposed to Blakeney, where the nave was rebuilt in 1434, nonetheless it supports the dating of this 'drawing' to the 15th century.**

predominated.<sup>4</sup>

This is not the complete picture, for since the 14th century the ports and havens of East Anglia had been important centres for fishing. Besides the farmer-fisherman, who produced for the family, and opportunistic coastal fishing close to shore, fishing had become an industry encompassing drift-netting for herring migrating south in late summer and autumn or sailing north to Iceland in the spring and summer to trade and fish for cod and ling.

But it was an industry subject to the vicissitudes of politics at all levels, besides economic and even religious pressures. Cod wars were not an invention of the twentieth century, they have persisted for at least 700 years.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, early in the 14th century there was a decline in the numbers of fish being landed, although by late in the 15th a recovery was apparent and this continued into the 16th century, so that by the time of the 1565 Survey conditions were improving.<sup>5</sup> What the effects of these fluctuations were on the local economy is not known, but it was occurring at a time when probably some of the graffiti was being produced.

The wealth of the area around the Haven has frequently been attributed to agriculture with products like corn and malt being exported to other areas of England and the continent. In contrast, the contribution of fishing and the sea to the local economy has possibly been underestimated. The limited number of wills for the area from the late 16th century indicates that people leaving bequests of ships and fishing gear were probably merchants and certainly owners of land and property.<sup>6</sup> Undoubtedly there is a bias here, but some people of means were investing in fishing and, given the number of ships they owned, were obviously hiring masters and crews.

Fishing must have been a dynamic industry with revenue being generated from many sources. While vessels were unloading and selling their catch in the Haven during the 14th century,<sup>5</sup> there is every reason to believe that fish were also sold at other markets. Surely local boats participating in the 'herring fare' – the herring season – would have joined the large annual fair at Yarmouth where boats from ports and countries from around the North Sea and even further afield gathered to land fish and trade. A century later there is further evidence of the entrepreneurial nature of the industry with a boat or boats from Cley landing preserved fish, presumably salted or dried, at Southampton together with vessels from many other ports.<sup>5</sup>

As a counter balance to wealth production the dangers and risks inherent in fishing and trading by ship must not be underestimated. The Icelandic voyages, for example, were danger-

ous undertakings; conditions would have been harsh aboard vessels on the northern fishing grounds and in some years many vessels were lost, while on the homeward voyage ships had to contend with the constant threat of attack from marauding pirates and privateers. The loss of a boat would have been devastating across the Haven communities: it would have meant that twenty to forty men were drowned, plus all the financial investment in the vessel, the gear and equipment besides the cargo had disappeared.

It is against this background of high risk and fluctuating fortunes that graffiti from, at least, the 15th and 16th centuries must be viewed. Risks not only to the sailors, but also to ship owners and merchants transporting their wares by sea. Moreover, even at home harmony did not reign, religious values were being challenged by changes from a Roman Catholic to an English church and a concomitant rise in Puritanism.

### **A Survey of the Ports, Creeks and Landing Places in Norfolk 1565**

**T**his Survey of Norfolk was organised by Sir Christopher Heydon, Osbert Moundeford and William Paston, three influential individuals who were members of worthy Norfolk families.<sup>2</sup> It contains information on the numbers of ships, their size and a simple classification of use, together with data on numbers of mariners, fishermen and householders in named places around the Norfolk coast. The summary sheet from the report is shown in Table 1.

Some caution has to be exercised when using this information. There are, for example, some strange omissions with smaller ports or landings along the north coast to the west of the Haven missing. Although this was rectified in another survey made 20 years later when Stiffkey, Brancaster, Holme and Hunstanton were included.<sup>4</sup>

A similar problem is the absence from the Haven of smaller fishing vessels of between 1 and 4 tons, although such boats were recorded from villages between Winterton and Mundesly. There they were involved in fishing for mackerel, herring, whiting and 'spurling', plus ferrying corn. Presumably at certain times of the year some of these boats would have operated off the beach and it is difficult to believe that similar vessels were not associated with the Haven.

In Suffolk the records for Dunwich show that a century earlier, in the 15th century, there were up to seven names employed for different types of boats, it is thought that many were comparatively small vessels used close to the shore.<sup>7</sup> This highlights a serious gap in local knowledge, which must be recognised given the diversity of ship graffiti found in the churches.

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<b>Place</b>	<b>House holders</b>	<b>Ships for Iceland</b>	<b>Crayers &amp; Boats of Burden</b>	<b>Mariners</b>	<b>Fish.</b>
<b>Yarmouth</b>	553	7	104	150	250
<b>Winterton</b>	24			6	8
<b>Hemsby</b>	27				4
<b>Waxham</b>	11		2	4	9
<b>Palling</b>	29		1	2	3
<b>'Coles'</b>	10		1	3	3
<b>Happisburgh</b>	30		2		
<b>Bromholm</b>	46		1		12
<b>Mundesley</b>	16		3		19
<b>Cromer</b>	117				48
<b>Sheringham</b>	136				69
<b>Weybourne</b>	35				14
<b>Salthouse</b>	58				21
<b>Cley</b>	100	9	14	35	25
<b>Wiveton</b>	80	1	5		53
<b>Blakeney</b>	80	4	8	30	18
<b>Wells</b>	90	7	7		60
<b>Burnham</b>	56		2	7	5
<b>Heacham</b>	76		1	3	2
<b>Snettisham</b>	79				
<b>Dersingham</b>	75		1	3	2
<b>Kings Lynn</b>	542		5	90	30
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2270</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>655</b>

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*Table 1. Summary sheet transcribed from the 1565 Survey. Note: the names of the Governors of each Port, Creek or Landing Place have not been included.*

**Cley****Sailing to Iceland**

John Dobbe	Mary Grace	100
Richard Wilkinson	Mary Grace	80
Robt Taylor & John Rooke	Megge	80
Richard Byshoppe	Leonard	60
Andrew Michelson	John	60
Gyles Symondes & Andrew Michelson	Thom's	55
John Rooke	Peter	50
Robt Roper & Richard Astle	Mary	50

**Herring fishing, carrying corn north  
and coals south**

Richard Byshoppe	Nicholas	40
Robt Dowell	Mary An	34
Richard Wilkinson	Goddes Grace	34
Henry Shilling		30
James Howarde & Richard Baylie	Anne Gallant	30
James Howarde	Cecille	27
John Rooke	Georg	20
John Springolde	Kate	20
Willm Prater	Py'nas	18
Edwarde Brooke	John	16
John Webster snr	George	16
John Webster snr	Peter	14
John Webster jnr		6

**Wiveton****Sailing to Iceland**

George Curry & John Smythe	Marie Fortune	70
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**Herring fishing, carrying corn north  
and coal south**

George Curry	James	50
Edmunde Bunting & Xpofer Thurlow	Nich'as	40
Margaret Smithe & John Smythe	Trinitie	40
John Smythe	Will'm	40
John Podage	M'get	20

**Snyterly (Blakeney)****Sailing to Iceland**

Thomas Barker	Mary George	80
Thomas Barker	Anne	80
Thomas Barker & John Dobbe	Gregory	60
Thomas Pay[g?]e	Mary Kateryn	60

**Herring fishing, carrying corn north  
and coal south**

George Barker	Valentyn	50
Thomas Page	Peter	50
Thomas Barker & John Dobbe	Blyth	40
Thomas Barker	Pet'r	35
Willm Barker & Richard Makdans	James	30
Symon Bright & John Person	Willm	20
Willm Rye	Endycke	15
Jeffry Tansy	Thomas	12

**Table 2. Extract transcribed from Survey showing owner(s) and name of ship plus size in tons, organised under types of trade.**

**Haven Shipping**

In 1565 the Haven was a creek of the Port of Great Yarmouth with all the Haven villages having loading and unloading rights under the jurisdiction of the Customs House of that Port. Yet only boats from the three principle villages of Cley, Wiveton and Blakeney were listed. These boats were divided into two groups, the larger boats that were voyaging to Iceland and the smaller boats associated with herring fishing and the coasting trade with northern ports in corn and coal (Table 2); the critical size for this division being about 50 tons\*.

The investment made by the three villages in the Iceland trade compared to other places in

Norfolk was considerable, to the extent that in this Survey it may be regarded as a defining feature of the Haven. Fourteen ships representing 50% of the vessels from the county were recorded as making the voyages north, although only thirteen are individually named. The other places involved were Wells and Yarmouth, with the latter contributing five boats of a hundred tons and over, nevertheless the Haven was still represented by the highest total tonnage.

**Types of Vessels**

The majority of the vessels recorded from the Haven irrespective of size or use were listed individually in the Survey as 'shippe'. The only significant exceptions were the smaller boats of less than 50 tons from Blakeney that were all individually identified as

\*Footnote: size at this time was measured in carrying capacity, rather than displacement

<b>Barker, Thomas</b> the elder			
1558	PCC	Blakeney	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "my parte of my shippe called the Valantyne"</li> <li>2. "my doggar Shippe called the George with all thinges therun to belonging [with] the voyage as god shal[l] sende her home"</li> </ol>
<b>Barker, John</b> the elder			
1562	NCC	Blakeney	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "all that my half of the Crayer Called the Valentyne"</li> </ol>
<b>Howard, James</b>			
1570	NCC	Cley	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "give as much borde and Tymber as to make a Bote [with] all"</li> <li>2. "give to James feaser of Beson one Boote [which] was Brookes and as many bordes as shall make her uppe"</li> <li>3. "one quarter that is the Forthe [parte] of my little shippe calde the Cicelie"</li> <li>4. "rest of the said Shippe that is the whole before any man payenge thertie powndes"</li> <li>5. "have our bote [with] twelve newe Owers [with] Mast Sayle and ruther"</li> </ol>
<b>Page, Thomas</b>			
1572	PCC	Blakeney	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "to Robart Page my sonne .... a quarter of my Shippe called the Peter with the tackle apparrell ymplementes"</li> <li>2. "to Thomas Page my Sonne a quarter of my other Shipp called the Peter together with the tackle"</li> <li>3. "a quarter of my Dogger shipp called the Marie Katherin"</li> </ol>
<b>Hawarde, Thomas</b>			
1588	PCC	Blakeney	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "trimming the Crayer at Lynne forty shillings"</li> </ol>
<b>Monne, Edward</b>			
1588	NCC	Cley	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. "my halfe shippe called the John Baptist w[ith] the app[er]tinannoos &amp; app[er]jell to her belongig"</li> </ol>

Note: NCC = Norwich Consistory Court PCC = Prerogative Court of Canterbury

**Table 3. Quotations from wills from the second half of the 16th century, together with the name of the person, the year the will was proven (either in Norwich or in Canterbury) and the place where the individual stated he was living.**

'craior' or 'crayor', yet it seems unlikely these were different from boats of comparable size from other places in the Haven (Table 2).

Even in the Bacon papers just over 10 years later still very few other types of vessels are recorded from the Haven: a hoy and two busses being brought in after being captured at sea and a hoy at Stiffkey.<sup>8</sup> At this time the buss was primarily a Dutch fishing vessel used for catching herring.<sup>9</sup>

There are many references to crayers in documents from the 15th and into the mid-16th centuries<sup>9</sup>, but herein lies another problem. For much of this period the English vessels were recorded as small sailing boats between 30 and 50 tons and this agrees with the Blakeney figures, but there must be some doubt whether these references always apply to the same type of boat. For example, two inventories for crayers

show the variations that existed in the number of masts or rigging and sail patterns. In 1536 a small crayer from 'Sowthropes' in Norfolk is described as a ship with two masts, a main and fore. Another inventory from the same century identifies a crayer with 3 masts. Nevertheless both of these accounts indicate that crayers had complex sail patterns even though it was a small and simple sailing vessel. There are even records of foreign crayers from the same period of up to 80 tons, so size does not appear to be a distinguishing feature, but what was?

### Evidence from Wills

**W**ills provide an opportunity to search for additional data that may illuminate these bare facts. So far references to six boats named in the Survey have been found in

wills from the second half of the 16th century<sup>6</sup> and this information is presented in Table 3.

Of the three smaller vessels only one, the Valentyne is identified as a crayer, the other two being called simply 'shippe' or 'my little shippe'. But another two, the 'George' and the 'Marie Katherin' involved in the Iceland trade are identified as doggers. The dogger was of Dutch origin, although it made an early appearance in England with a reference from 1357 of such a boat from Norfolk being involved in the North Sea and Icelandic fisheries.<sup>9</sup> However, the name persisted into at least the nineteenth century and is immortalised in the 'Dogger Bank'.

Phrases in both Dutch and English refer to 'dogge varen' and 'Dogger fare'. The Dutch can be translated as 'to go cod fishing', while the English phrase is applied to a ship at Yarmouth ready to sail to Iceland.<sup>9</sup> But what did doggers look like and did the design change over the centuries? The only clues lie in their size, the two Blakeney boats were 80 and 60 tons.

The wills also illustrate two other points. Firstly vessels had multiple owners leaving 'halfe' and 'quarter' parts to beneficiaries, and secondly the frequent references to nets. Owners of ships were leaving large numbers of 'manfare\* of nettes', with a distinction being made between those that were roped and ready for the sea and others. These were drift nets and the inference is that all types of boats, including crayers, were using these nets in the herring fishing that dominated the autumn months.

The 1588 will of Edward Monne of Cley includes an illuminating phrase: "three manfare\* of nettes commonlye called nyne soores as they now be with one rope". The three manfare were obviously joined together, while nyne soores (nine score) refers to the size of the net; there were other sizes of six and twelve score but nine was the commonest. The nine score means that the depth of the net was 180 meshes, as each mesh was about one inch square, this net would have been fifteen feet deep.<sup>10</sup>

There are also references to 'sperlinge nettes'. Sperlinge (there are various spellings) have been identified as sprats<sup>10</sup> or smelts<sup>11</sup>; both types of fish are considerably smaller than herring, so the mesh size would have been adjusted accordingly. There is, however, a problem: if they were used for catching sprat then they would probably have been drift nets, but if they were for smelt which frequently enter estuaries they could have been shore or drag nets.

## Households

The inclusion in the Survey of household totals (Table 1) for each village enables another aspect of the communities to be explored. Haven villages were not individually large, ranking behind Yarmouth and Lynn, both important ports with a highly populated hinterland accessible by boats. Then there was a large gap to Sheringham and Cromer followed by the three Haven villages and Wells. But when the totals for the three villages of Cley, Wiveton and Blakeney are amalgamated they form the largest concentration of households along the north coast of the county, yet still only about half the size of Yarmouth.

Households, however, are not synonymous with families, although it would appear that over many centuries the predominate type was in fact one married couple with their own children in a single household.<sup>12</sup> That is not to say that large households did not exist, rather they were rare and not the norm. Indeed, the only study available gives an average household size in England between 1564 and 1649 as 5.1 persons, dropping to between 4.5 and 4.7 in the period 1650 to 1749.<sup>13</sup>

Using the multiplier of 5.1 the population for Cley in 1565 was just over 500 and for both Blakeney and Wiveton about 400. These figures make interesting comparisons with population estimates for Blakeney and Cley made over two centuries later in 1770 and 1801. In Blakeney in 1770, 458 residents were recorded in 100 households,<sup>14</sup> but the population grew in the next 30 years, between 1770 and 1801, by 169 persons, more than in the previous two centuries.<sup>14</sup> In Cley in 1801 there were 550 people, but the number of households is unknown.

These data for population sizes between 1565 and 1770 or 1801 are consistent with trends in the total English population that suggest for over four centuries prior to the middle of the 18th century there was very limited expansion. Indeed it has been suggested that there may have been fewer inhabitants in England in 1750 than in 1300, a major factor being the catastrophic decline in the 14th century. However, this picture changed dramatically at the end of the 18th, during the whole of the 19th century and on into the 20th when there were spectacular increases in population size.<sup>13</sup>

A diversion – the population survey made of Blakeney in 1770<sup>14</sup> is invaluable for it was taken at a critical time when the population numbers in the village were on the brink of a major change. It records information for every household in the village and shows that the overwhelming majority consisted of single family units. The average size of a household was 4.58 people, although there were a few large house-

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\*Footnote: the term is obviously a measure of drift nets but there appears to be no consensus regarding the meaning

holds and two may have been local inns. Although this survey was made slightly later than the period 1650 to 1749 for which a figure of 4.5 – 4.7 persons per household is quoted,<sup>13</sup> it is consistent with it. So while the number of households in Blakeney rose by 20, that is 25% over two centuries, the population increased by less than 15%; however, caution – these figures could easily lie within the margins of error.

The data for households are illuminating in a different context: at nearly the mid-point between 1565 and 1770, a series of Hearth Taxes were taken. In the surviving return lists for 1664 and 1666 only the number of houses with hearths on which tax was to be paid survive, the numbers of houses exempt from taxation are missing. Based on the information given above, the total number of households in Blakeney for these years should lie between 80 and 100, but in the two years only 34 and 32 houses are listed as paying Hearth Tax.<sup>15 & 16</sup> This leaves a deficit of about 50 houses exempt from tax. The basis for exemption being people who did not pay local church and poor taxes and did not own property over a certain value, so presumably the majority of those who were exempt were the poorer people of the community.<sup>17</sup> This is a large proportion of the community who are frequently ignored, as they leave few if any written records, and an apt reminder that they must be considered when looking at graffiti.

There are a number of possible explanations for the large numbers of exemptions: firstly there is an error in the figures, but they are consistent with data from other sources; secondly there was a major fall in the numbers of houses inhabited, there is no evidence on this point, or thirdly the economy of the village was depressed and many people were poor. The last explanation is supported by information from the shipping records that show a decline in numbers of Glaven ships using the port in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>18</sup> This would be an interesting issue to explore!

It is tempting to speculate even further, even though this may be unwise. There is, nevertheless, sufficient information to suggest that in the centuries prior to 1770, which was probably the period when much of the graffiti was made, population numbers for, at least, one village were comparatively stable. Nevertheless, the risks of death in these coastal communities were probably higher than in many inland communities. On top of the prevailing vicissitudes in the rest of the county death from drowning or being killed at sea was a constant threat and there is no reason to presume that it was lower in the 16th century than in the 18th and 19th when it is known that many ships and lives were lost on these shores.<sup>19</sup> So, if the population of the

Haven villages was not declining this loss of life would need to be balanced by in-migration of people<sup>20</sup> or an higher birth rate than for villages inland. Furthermore, it may not be unreasonable to expect local communities to be frequently challenged by wide range of diseases being carried by seamen that have been infected in other ports, both in this country and overseas.

## Mariners and Fishermen

Although an attempt was made in the 1565 Survey to differentiate between mariners and fishermen this obviously broke down in some places. There could have been a multitude of reasons, but it is extremely likely that seamen moved between tasks depending on the season. So here they are all treated as a single group.

The high numbers of seamen compared with the number of households in the Haven villages clearly indicates the dependency of these communities on the sea (Table 1). The ratio lies between 63 and 72 seamen per 100 households. However, as some households would have had more than one member involved with the sea, this figure could have dropped to about 50% of households that were dependant for their sustenance on men working aboard boats. However, there would have been numerous other trades dependant on ships, trading and the fishing industry, from shipwrights to those providing provisions, but also those organising the distribution outlets whether it be merchants buying and selling or carriers taking fish to inland villages and towns.

Both Yarmouth and Wells have similar patterns to the Haven villages, but Kings Lynn would appear to be different with a ratio of only 22 to 100 and this may point towards differences in trading patterns with the latter having greater reliance on ships from the Low Countries. However, these figures could also reflect a more fundamental difference: In medieval times it has been suggested that Kings Lynn was a trading port, while Wells and the villages of Blakeney Haven were fishing ports, with Yarmouth unusual in being both.<sup>5</sup> Did this pattern persist? If it did, then it is reasonable to speculate that the differences in the ratios reflects the much higher numbers of fishermen needed aboard fishing vessels, particularly the Iceland boats, compared to boats involved solely in trading.

## Discussion

The richness of the graffiti, and particularly 'drawings' of ships, found in the churches associated with Blakeney Haven, particularly Salthouse, Cley, Wiveton and Blakeney,

surpasses any found in the surrounding parishes. The obvious questions are why this abundance and in this context what is the relevance of the 1565 Survey?

The Survey highlights the importance of ships in the local communities, whether they were involved in coastal trade or fishing for herring and making the dangerous voyages north to Iceland. This pattern had probably existed for the previous two centuries and the concomitant risks involved would have been a constant and continuing hazard. The communities would always have been vulnerable to unexpected death and the loss of a ship and its cargo. Together with the wills the Survey shows that such tragedies would have had repercussions across many social levels and potentially many households.

Political uncertainties and economic and religious pressures must have compounded these risks. Yet people still invested and were involved in these ventures, probably out of necessity and the hope of an excellent financial return.

Against this background the position of the church would have been pivotal, it was a place where many would have turned to in times of thanks and grief. Graffiti in these circumstances could have played a very poignant role: an offering for deliverance both before and after a voyage, a reminder to pray for those at sea and for the souls of the dead or those residing in purgatory.

So, while the nature of the community played a crucial role in the production of the ship graffiti, has the history and nature of the churches influenced what is seen today?

Where churches are built with a stone that is particularly soft, as in some areas of Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, the richness of the graffiti has been attributed to the ease of scratching the stone surface.<sup>1</sup> This cannot be the case with the Haven churches where the stone is much harder, although the wood and painted surfaces used at Salthouse would be a more accommodating surface.

The range of dates found amongst the graffiti provides another clue for it demonstrates that it has accumulated over many centuries, even though the rate has probably varied. For example, there is, as might be anticipated, very little from the twentieth century, while in contrast many of the merchant marks are probably attributable to the 15th and 16th centuries.

Accordingly, the long time scale provided the opportunity for graffiti to accumulate and consequently this must be a contributory factor to the diversity, so must the depth that the lines are incised and the hardness of the stone that enabled some 'drawings' to survive in spite of the churches being cleaned and restored. Nevertheless, the many unconnected lines and

fragments of ships that can be found today indicates that much has probably been lost and even obscured by later 'drawings'.

Nevertheless, it is amazing that any has survived given the successive changes and restorations that churches have undergone since they were first built. The interior surfaces have been painted, covered in limewash and subsequently cleaned to give the austere forms that are so admired today. Undoubtedly other 'drawings' remain hidden under the limewash that still covers some of the interior surfaces of these churches, although occasionally they show through as stains in the overlying wash.

Even given these constraints some patterns are emerging, the most obvious is that the ship graffiti is not distributed randomly within the churches, but is concentrated in selected areas, although not exclusively so. In three of the churches the favoured locations are the columns of the nave at heights of less than two metres.

Another aspect that is easily forgotten was the ability of congregations using the churches to identify the people making the graffiti – the merchant marks, the signatures and even the initials. Indeed, some of the people making this graffiti would have been pillars of the local community. Surely a conclusion must be that these additions to the fabric of the church were not considered acts of vandalism, as they are today. Continuing this line of thought raises the intriguing possibility that in a community so dependant on the sea many of the 'drawings' of ships would also have been identifiable and instantly linked to the individuals who owned or worked aboard them.

Although no direct link can be made between the graffiti and the Survey, there are clues that show some congruence between the two. So the initial objective to use the Survey to provide both a setting and a context for, at least, some of the graffiti has been achieved. Poignantly, this same graffiti continues today to be a reminder of the people who lived, worked and worshiped in these villages.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks must be extended to Mary Ferroussat who first introduced me to the 'drawings' of ships in Wiveton Church during the Society's project on the village and to my wife for much help and enduring many hours searching for graffiti.

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# Blakeney Point Nature Reserve and University College, London.

by D J B White

*Synopsis: An account of Professor F W Oliver's part in securing Blakeney Point as a nature Reserve, and of the consequent relationship between the Botany Department of University College, London with the Point which has lasted for 95 years. Blakeney Point became a National Nature Reserve in 1994.*

## Introduction

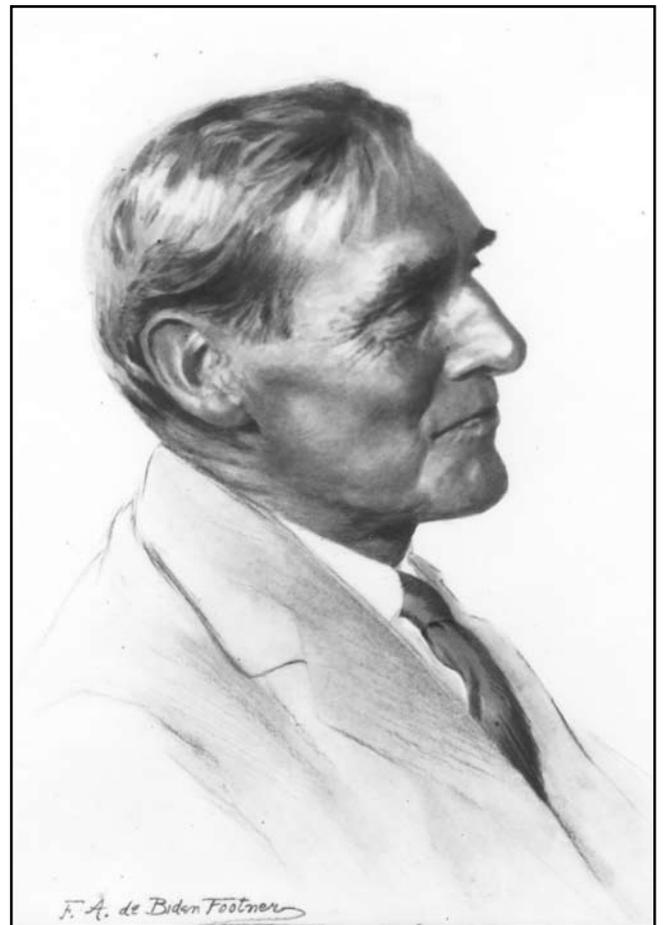
Blakeney Point was well known to naturalists long before it became a nature reserve. It had for many years been famous for its breeding colony of Common Terns. It is known with certainty that there had been a ternery on the Point since 1830 and it may well have existed there much earlier than this. Ornithologists have also known the Point as an excellent place to observe both autumn and spring migrants.

Botanists too, had not overlooked the Point. Professor C.C. Babington (1808-1895) recorded in his 'Journal' for 1834 visiting the Point "May 22nd. Left Cambridge to spend a few days with W. Whitear at Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk. May 23rd. We went upon the bank of shingle that divides the marshes and the harbour from the open sea. Walked as far as the Blakeney Meads (low hills of sand nearly surrounded by the sea)". Babington went on to record the plants they found, all of which will be found growing there today although some of them we now know under other names.<sup>1</sup>

## Professor F W Oliver

That Blakeney Point, from Cley Beach Road westwards, eventually became a Nature Reserve was largely due to the foresight, enthusiasm and inspiration provided by one man, Professor F.W. Oliver (1884-1951). He was the son of Daniel Oliver, Professor of Botany at University College, London. F.W.O., at the age of twenty-four, succeeded his father as Head of the Botany Department in 1888 and became professor two years later, occupying the Chair until his retirement in 1929.

F.W. Oliver, who studied at the Universities of London and Cambridge spent two of his vacations in Germany where, at that time, the best training in research was to be obtained. He spent the summer of 1885 at the University of Bonn under Professor Eduard Strasburger and



**Figure 1. Crayon drawing of Professor F W Oliver by Frances de Bieden Footner c1930**

there he met A.F.W. Schimper and H. Schenck. This association with two distinguished plant geographers was the starting point of Oliver's interest in plant ecology. Up to the end of the nineteenth century the general outlook on vegetation was a static one; but already Oliver had been particularly impressed by the mobility of sand dunes and shingle systems.<sup>2</sup>

In 1903 Professor Oliver took his students on a visit to the Norfolk Broads. In the following year he took an expedition to the Bouche d'Erquy on the north coast of Brittany, where the

salt marshes were studied. This became an annual event until 1909.

In 1908 Oliver had an attack of pleurisy and spent his convalescence on the Norfolk coast, and paid his first visit to Blakeney Point. He saw clearly the possibilities that the Point offered for the study of the dynamic processes which shaped maritime habitats.

In 1910 the Sixth Lord Calthorpe, shortly before his death, gave Professor Oliver and his students from University College, London, facilities to carry out an extended survey of the vegetation of Blakeney point. Thus began the long association between the Botany Department of University College and Blakeney Point which still exists to this day.

In the summer of 1911 the Blakeney Estate (including Blakeney Point) of the late Lord Calthorpe was sold. However the purchaser was agreeable to selling off the Point as a separate lot.

The same summer the International Phytogeographical Excursion visited the Point and "its members formed the strong opinion that no area could be more suitable for a Nature Reserve than Blakeney Point, and that it should be so secured".<sup>3</sup>

Oliver obtained the help of Mr. G. Claridge Druce, a distinguished amateur botanist, and through him influential interest was aroused and thanks largely to the generosity of the late Mr. Charles Rothschild and the help of the Fishmonger's Company, Blakeney was purchased in the summer of 1912 and handed over to the National Trust to be maintained as a Nature Reserve.

## The National Trust

The National Trust expressed its intention "to preserve intact this beautiful spot and especially the natural vegetation and fauna for which it is famous". The trust appointed a committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. A.W. Cozens-Hardy, to manage the property. Professor Oliver was appointed Secretary, a position he occupied until his retirement from the College in 1929. Dr. E.J. Salisbury of the Botany Department was also a member of the Committee.

The Committee drew up regulations designed to protect the flora and fauna, and stated clearly that these regulations were not intended to interfere with local "industries" such as gathering Samphire or bait digging.

When the property came to the National Trust there were some house-boats and a number of small huts which had been sanctioned by the late Lord Calthorpe on payment of a small annual "beach-right". The Trust granted annual agreements to the various owners at

somewhat increased ground-rents (Annual Report, 1913).<sup>3</sup>

In 1910 the Old Lifeboat House, the long, low, tarred building which had been moved to its present position was brought by Professor Oliver for £50. This was renovated and used to accommodate his students. The College Council insisted on refunding the money and so the Old Lifeboat House became the property of the Botany Department. The refunded £50 was used by Oliver towards refurbishing the interior of the building.

A new Lifeboat House was constructed, but this became redundant when the sand dunes grew and made it impossible for the Lifeboat to be moved in or out of the Lifeboat House. The Lifeboat remained anchored in the channel until the Lifeboat Station was discontinued.

This ex-lifeboat House was later acquired by the National Trust to provide accommodation for the Warden and now also functions as an information centre, by which name this building should be known.

Lord Calthorpe had, in 1910, approved a proposal that a Laboratory for use in connexion with fieldwork should be built on the Point and had allocated a site for this purpose. His death occurred before this plan could be implemented. After the Point had become the property of the National Trust, the Trust approved the plan and agreed to a laboratory being built on the suggested site, just to the south of Glaux Low. An appeal in March 1913 for funds for the project soon raised the required sum and the building undertaken by Mr. W.R Allen of Blakeney was ready for use by July 1st 1913.

## University College, London

From 1910 until 1929 Oliver took his students and colleagues to Blakeney every summer, and he himself, alone or with others was frequently there at other times of the year. He recorded in 1927 that "in this way in twenty-four years, many hundreds of students have not merely enjoyed an experience they will never forget, but have also come face to face with the operations of Nature in its most dynamic form".<sup>3</sup>

During these years much original work was carried out on the physiographical changes taking place and on the relation of the vegetation to these changes. Studies on the vegetation of the shingle banks, marshes and sand dunes in relation to their respective habitats were made. Results of the work undertaken appeared in various journals and by 1929 twenty-nine Blakeney Point Publications had been published. A series of Blakeney Point Reports were issued for the years 1913-1929<sup>3</sup>. In addition an Annotated List of the Birds of Blakeney Point was published.<sup>4</sup>



**Photograph 1. The laboratory built just south of Glaux Low**

Some idea of the amount of pioneer work achieved by Oliver and his associates may be gained by looking at the section on Maritime and Sub-maritime Vegetation (Chapters 40, 41 and 42) in Tansley's "The British Islands and their Vegetation" (1949).<sup>5</sup>

This area, the scene of much fundamental research and teaching is indeed one of the best documented Nature Reserves in Britain.

In the decade following Oliver's retirement in 1929 from the Quain Chair of Botany at University College, visits to the Point became less frequent but some useful work was published. All such work was in abeyance during the war years.

In 1946 the Department renewed its relationship with the Point. The new head of the Department, Professor W.H. Pearsall visited the Point and Dr (later Professor) Frank Jane restarted the regular visits each year of the undergraduate students of Botany.

The local Committee was reformed with Dr Jane (as Chairman) and Dr D.J.B. White as the two College representatives along with local people representing local interests. Mr E. de Bazille Corbin, the National Trust agent was the Secretary.

During the ensuing period an increasing

amount of scientific work was undertaken. An up-to-date bird list and a plant list were published.

Among the work undertaken by the students as part of their training was a study of the vegetation of different areas of the Point by means of quadrats and line transects. The students normally worked in pairs and the results of all the pairs were pooled. In this way over the years a considerable body of data was accumulated which would reveal any changes which were occurring. Such data was, of course, invaluable whenever the Management Plan for the area was under consideration.

Much useful data was also provided by the Warden and his assistants who were on the Point full time. In particular they were responsible for monitoring the populations of breeding birds. They would also record details of unusually high tides and any changes to the shingle bank or dunes that followed.

Many ornithologists visit the Point, especially during migration times, and their observations add to the bird records for the Point, as can be seen by reference to the annual Norfolk Bird Reports published by the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society.



**Photograph 2. Ted Eales, Professor W H Pearsall and a student arriving at the Point**

### **The Point Warden**

The Warden in the immediate post-war years was Mr W.E. (Ted) Eales, whose name will always be associated with the Point. Ted had been appointed Warden in 1939 following the death of his father, but the war came and Ted served in the Royal Navy. On his return in late 1945 Ted was faced with a more difficult task than any of the Wardens before or since have had to deal with. There were two main problems. Before the war visitors were relatively few and they were able to wander at will over the Point without causing much trouble (or damage) in the ternery. But each year after the war visitor numbers increased steadily and it was no longer possible to allow visitors to walk through the ternery because of the continued disturbance to the breeding birds and also damage to the nests.

Ted Eales suggested to the Committee that the ternery should be wired off. Not all the Committee members were entirely happy about this. It was finally agreed to give the idea a trial. The ternery would be wired off with a single strand of wire in the spring when the terns would arrive and removed by 15th August when

breeding would be over. In the event wiring off the ternery in this way worked well and has been done each year since. The boatmen bringing visitors to the Point have been a great help in this by explaining to their passengers the purpose of the wired off areas.

The other problem faced by the Warden and his assistant (Mr Reggie Gaze) was caused by people referred to by the Wardens as “bush-bashers” or “bush-beaters”. These were people who walked the Point from Cley hoping to see migrant birds. When they reached a stand of Suaeda bushes they would ‘beat’ the bushes hoping to drive out the birds. Recently arrived migrants would be tired and needed to rest and feed. The efforts of Ted and Reggie to stop this activity caused some ill-feeling on the part of the birders. But happily such behaviour was stopped and indeed would now be frowned upon by all bird-watchers.

### **UCL Conservation Courses**

In 1960 an event took place at University College which was, indirectly, of importance to the work done on the Point. On the joint initiative of the College and the Nature



**Photograph 3. The Old and New Lifeboat houses**

Conservancy (now called English Nature), a post-graduate Diploma in Conservation was started. This was an innovation and a pioneer course because the importance of Conservation was not generally recognised. The establishment of this course owed much to the foresight and understanding of Professor W.H. Pearsall and Mr Max Nicholson then Director-General of the Nature Conservancy.

The University converted the Diploma course into an MSc and this course over the years has provided a cadre of young men and women who have gone on to work in Conservation both in this country and overseas.

Other institutions have since followed the lead of University College and now there are many such courses available.

The University College Conservation Course came to Blakeney Point regularly – usually in September. Among other things during their training they did a lot of mapping and surveying and in particular provided us with maps which recorded the changes in the shingle ridges which form the Far Point complex.

In 1963 Professor Frank Jane died unexpectedly and was succeeded as Chairman by Dr D.J.B. White who held this office (except for an interregnum of two years when Major A. Athill was Chair) until July 1993 when the Committee

was subsumed into a larger committee (the Blakeney Area Advisory Committee) responsible for all the National Trust properties in the area. A small scientific sub-committee was charged with looking after the Point.

While the Botany Department continues to bring undergraduates annually to Blakeney Point, it is probably true to say that there is not so much ongoing work on the Point as in the past. This is due partly to changes in the particular interests of present members of the staff of the department but such work has by no means ceased.

There is yet another strand in the relationship between the College and the National Trust. In 1947 Sir Arthur Tansley became the Honorary Advisor on Ecology to the National Trust.<sup>6</sup> Tansley had worked at University College under Professor F.W. Oliver who introduced him to Blakeney Point.

## Conclusion

I have dealt in this article with the relationship between the Trust and the Botany Department – a relationship which has existed for 95 years, to the great advantage of both. The Trust has had the scientific work and recording (which needs to be done on any

Nature Reserve) done for it and many generations of students have had the opportunity of doing fieldwork in a wonderful area. An area to which many return to visit in later years. Blakeney is inevitably a topic of conversation when former Botany Students meet.

This article deals with the relationship between the College and the National Trust. But of course there is another important relationship – that between the people of Blakeney, Morston, Cley and other nearby villages and the Point. This relationship is well dealt with by Ted Eales in the book he wrote about his work after his retirement.<sup>7</sup> It also contains a fine appreciation of Professor Oliver who clearly made a great impression on the young Ted Eales.

In 1994 Blakeney Point received the accolade of being designated a National Nature Reserve as recorded on the plaque in the Information Centre on the Point. The accolade was felt by some of us as being somewhat over due.

I have been glad of the opportunity to write this article. Ninety-five years is a long time, and many of the people involved with the Point have passed on. The memories of others are growing dim. I hope this article will be of value to all who come to the Point, and future generations of Botany Students at the College and to the staff, present and future of the National Trust.

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# Back Pages

## Work in Progress: The Cockthorpe Project

*Introduced by Frank Hawes and Pamela Peake*

The parish of Cockthorpe has had long and continuous links with the villages of the lower Glaven. It was formerly the seat of the Calthorpe family who until the early twentieth century also held land in Wiveton and Blakeney and from whom Nathaniel Bacon rented a home somewhere in Cockthorpe, whilst his new Hall at Stiffkey was being built. Then from 1744 till 1927 the benefice of Cockthorpe with Little Langham was consolidated with that of Blakeney, with the rectors living in Blakeney.

For a land locked parish, Cockthorpe excelled in having two Stuart Admirals baptised in the parish church, namely Sir John Narborough followed ten years later by Sir Cloudesley Shovell. Other mariners who are not so well remembered also hailed from the parish no doubt attracted by the sea rather than work on the land. Amongst these were five of six Dew brothers, with Thomas Dew becoming the Harbour Master of Blakeney in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

A recent UEA Local History course led by one of our members, Chris Barringer, provided the stimulus to explore local parishes further and it is hoped develop research interests that will continue. This was the incentive to look at the old parish of Cockthorpe with the now redun-

dant church of All Saints providing the focus at the start of the project, a choice that was warmly welcomed by the late Lady Harrod, Founder of The Norfolk Churches Trust.

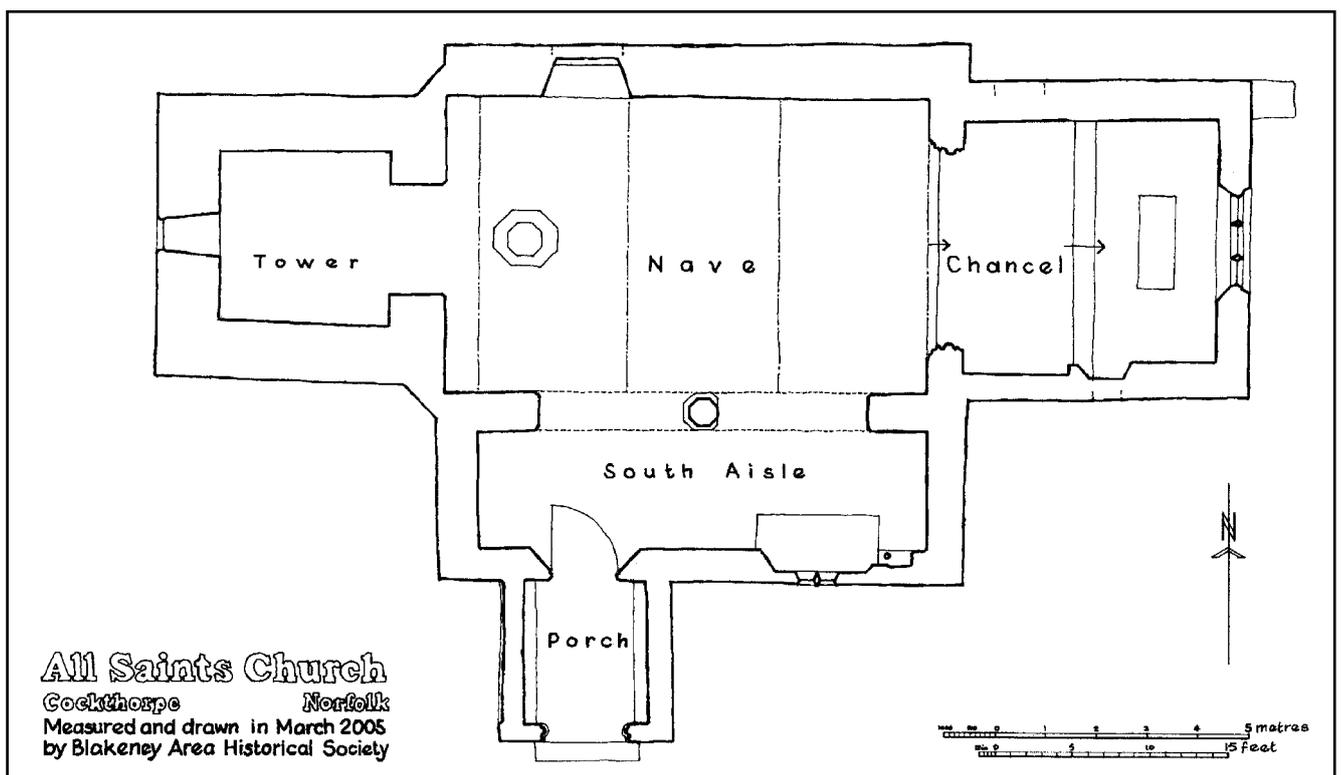
Before work started in earnest in March 2005, Lyn Stilgoe, a church enthusiast, began by leading us on a guided tour, indicating features of both historical and architectural interest. Then under the guidance of Frank Hawes, a small team took measurements of the church both inside and out from which the plan presented here was prepared. A second, smaller group led by Pamela Peake, recorded the monumental inscriptions in the churchyard and after these are checked against the Parish Registers they will be published.

### Some thoughts on the church

Many interesting questions were identified during the preparation of the plan, for example, the strange arrangement at the junction of the nave and the tower that needs further thought.

The tower apparently dates from c1300, but the north wall of the nave is much older. The lower part is almost certainly Saxon with fine examples of flint quoins which surprisingly neither Pevesner<sup>1</sup> nor Mortlock and Roberts<sup>2</sup> mention. The height of this north wall was raised, probably when the clerestory on the south side was added, but when was this? The arcade below the clerestory is probably of similar date to the tower though the clerestory windows seem contemporary with the fine 15th century roof.

From the interior of the nave it can be clearly seen that the roof is formed of three bays, but it





**Photograph 1. Cockthorpe Church from the south-east in the early Spring with myriads of snowdrops flowering in the churchyard. Many interesting features are visible: the Porch, South Aisle, Clerestory and Tower with remnants of the old nave roofline showing.**



**Photograph 2. North-west corner of the nave where it abuts onto the tower, showing the flint quoins of the Saxon wall of the nave and the fillet of brick and flint bridging the corner between the nave and the tower.**

stops short of the west wall by about 600mm (2 feet). One suggestion is that the roof timbers were brought from another church that had slightly different dimensions. Another is that the ancient west wall of the nave could have once filled this gap. This would be strange, but the existence on the exterior of triangular fillets that now link the tower to the nave could possibly be associated. They are not bonded into either the tower or the nave walls and seem to have been built to close gaps which came into being after the tower was built.

There are many tantalising problems that need to be explored and there will no doubt be similar anomalies to be unravelled between the monumental inscriptions and the written records. All will be reported in future numbers of the Glaven Historian.

Participants included Helen Brandt, John Cucksey, Frank Hawes, Maurice Matthews, John and Pam Peake, Jan Semple, Lyn Stilgoe, but special thanks must go to Sue Matthews who provided life-saving warmth and refreshments on some cold winter days.

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### From the Norwich Mercury Smugglers!

Extract from the 23rd-30th June 1733 edition: "Wednesday last, 18 Smugglers were pursued from Cley, and that coast as far as Kimberley, in Norfolk, by the Customs and Excise Officers, about 13 in number, Arm'd; and altho' the Smugglers were so many in number and some Arms, only one made Resistance, and while he and a Custom-House Officer were fighting, one of the Smugglers (as 'tis said) shot at the Officer, but miss'd him, and shot one of the Gang into the Breast, who dy'd Yesterday. The Officers secured 5 of them, with 19 Horses, and all their Cargoe, being near 200 Weight of Tea and other Contraband Goods on each Horse. The 5 Smugglers were carry'd before Justice HERNE on Thursday, who committed them to the Castle, for refusing to find Sureties. Their names are as follows, viz. George Baulick, Tho Cockerel, John Dorcarry, Robert Day, and William Bream."

One is tempted to think the Excisemen must have had a tip-off, and time to call up reinforcements, as thirteen Officers was about double the usual complement at Cley Customs House. Kimberley is between Wymondham and East Dereham, some 30 miles from Cley, so it must have been a fair old chase.

The confiscated contraband would often be sold off to help defray the running costs of the Customs House.

Another potential contribution to their funds was reported in a later edition of the Norwich Mercury 26th June-3rd July 1736:

"Yesterday se'nnight was carried to the Custom-House in Cley, fourteen Gallons of Brandy, and Six Hundred and Ninety Pounds of Tea, which was seiz'd the Day before near Northwalsham [sic], by Mr John Bayfield and Mr John Massingham, Officers in the Customs."

For some reason, on this occasion it was the Officers rather than the smugglers who received the name-check. Both the Bayfield and the Massingham families still live in the area.

## From the Norwich Mercury Property Announcements

The Announcements and Advertisements that peppered the pages of the Norwich Mercury (and other papers) often provide intriguing glimpses into the commercial life of the community. An example is the Salt-water Bath at Clay which advertised its attractions in the 14th April 1764 edition in the following terms:

*“At CLAY next the Sea, in Norfolk  
A SALT-WATER BATH,  
WHICH may be supplied with Sea-Water several  
Times in a Day, if required. This Bath has met  
with the Approbation of those Gentlemen and  
Ladies who have made trial of it.  
Good Lodgings, &c. to be had near the said  
Bath, on the most reasonable Terms.  
Enquire of Thomas Smith, of Clay aforesaid.”*

Some 27 years later the premises were being offered for sale in the 11th June 1791 issue:

*“CLEY BATH  
To be SOLD by AUCTION  
By J BURCHAM  
On Monday the 20th June instant, at the  
Fishmongers Arms at Cley next the Sea, Norfolk  
(if not sooner disposed of by Private Contract),  
between the hours of Three and Six o'clock, sub-  
ject to such conditions as will be then produced,  
ALL those premises commonly called the  
BATHING-HOUSE, at Cley aforesaid, lately in the  
occupation of Miss Mary Smith, deceased: com-  
prising a kitchen, 2 parlors, bakehouse, pantry,  
cellar, 4 lodging rooms, 5 garrets, 2 small gar-  
dens, with brewhouse, coalhouses, a two-stalled  
stable, & other convenient buildings, together  
with the 2 baths adjoining the Channel, regularly  
supplied by the tide with sea-water, and neces-  
sary dressing rooms to accommodate each.  
NB. It is presumed this situation is worth the  
attention of any person properly qualified, as it  
affords not only a genteel way of life, but a profit-  
able one, and no capital required.*

*Part of these premises are freehold and part  
copyhold.*

*For particulars apply to Mr Purdy, at Kelling,  
or Mr Burcham, at Holt.”*

The sale having gone through, the new owner set about improving his purchase, which was advertised in the 5th May 1792 issue in the following terms:

*“CLEY next the SEA, NORFOLK  
MR KALURE, Surgeon and Apothecary, respect-  
fully acquaints Ladies and Gentlemen, and the  
Public in general, that he has fitted up, on a new  
construction, a SEA-WATER FLOATING MACHINE*

*for Cold and Warm BATHING (the Old Bath being  
entirely laid aside), with two Dressing-Rooms,  
and other conveniences, and with proper attend-  
ance, which was opened for Compnay on the 1st  
May – Boarding and Lodging in a roomy and con-  
venient House, and on more reasonable terms  
than in most places in Wngland.”*

Unfortunately we have absolutely no idea to which property all this refers. This was prior to the building of the present bank and sluice so the Glaven would have been tidal all the way to Glandford Mill, though it seems probable that the premises were located at the northern end of the village near the quays.

Another property offered to let in the 30th August 1746 issue clearly was near the quay (though this is not immediately apparent):

*“To be LETT,  
And enter'd upon immediately, at Clay near Holt  
in the County of Norfolk,  
A Well-accustomed Brewing-Office, with all  
Brewing Materials thereto belonging, with a con-  
venient Dwelling-House adjoining, together with a  
Set of good and Well-accustomed Drawing-Houses,  
proper and convenient for the same; the whole  
now occupied by Mr BENJAMIN SMITH.  
NB. The Stock of Beer, and all other Stock of  
the said Mr SMITH in the Brewing Business, is to  
be sold.  
Enquire of Mr JAYE at Holt, or of Mr SMITH at  
Clay aforesaid.”*

What appears to be the same premises, with added land, were on offer again three years later in the 29th July 1749 issue:

*“To be Lett, and Enter'd upon  
at Michaelmas next,  
at Clay in Norfolk,  
A Very Convenient BREWING-OFFICE, with a  
good Dwelling-House and Outhouses thereto  
belonging, also several Drawing-Houses well  
Tenanted, and about a hundred acres of Arable  
and Pasture Land.  
NB. The House is well situated near the Key,  
and if it do not immediately meet with a Tenant for  
it as a Brewing-Office, shall Lett it to a Merchant,  
there being all Conveniences belonging for that pur-  
pose. For further Particulars enquire of Mr  
FRAMINGHAM JAY, at Holt in Norfolk.”*

Presumably no tenant was found as the property was advertised again on the 7th April 1750; this time the land was optional and the brewing utensils were to be sold. More was made of its convenience for a merchant.

Again we have not identified the property in question (there are a few candidates) but Jay occupied the house now known as Mill Leet.

## From the Norwich Mercury Election Fever!

Sir Robert Walpole was fighting for a new lease of power – a great contest was in the offing between Walpole's Whig candidates and the Tory opposition in the Election of 1733.

*“Holt. September 12th. On Monday last Wm Morden, Esq., one of the [Whig] candidates for the county of Norfolk at the ensuing election, came to the place, accompanied by Lord Hobart and Lord Lovell, Sir Philip Astley and Sir Chas Turner, Barts., Harbord Harbord, Isaac Letteup, Augustine Earle, Peter Elwin Esqs., a numerous body of clergy and several other persons of distinction and aboe five hundred freeholders on horseback. They invited all to drink the healths of His Majesty, the Queen, Prince, Duke, Princess Royal and the rest of the Royal Family, together with those of the Prince of Orange and Sir Robert Walpole with that sincerity as becomes loyal subjects of the best of Kings and Friends to a most able and faithful minister. The whole company repeated their assurances of supporting the interest of the above-mentioned candidates to the utmost of their power.”*

The victory was won by six votes! In a later edition of December 1733 it was reported that:

*“It is believed that Sir Robert Walpole spent £60,000 over the election.”*

A much later edition of the Norwich Mercury reported on the festival at Holt given on 12th August 1814 following the end of the war with France and the banishment of Bonaparte to Elba:

*A festival was held at Holt in commemoration of the happy return of Peace. Subscriptions for the festival poured in to the amount of £169 19s. At noon a signal gun was fired and the inhabitants formed up in procession in the market place. This was led by 24 young ladies, the band, the flag-bearers, the large laurel-decked Peace Loaf. The dinner company of about seven hundred persons all cleanly dressed in their Sunday clothes and wearing white cockades were assembled in twelve parties under the respective presidency of the Rector W Barwick Esq., the Rev J C Leake, Messrs Sales, King, Withers, Banks, Cheatte, Leech, Shalders, Allen and Baker; 24 genteel youths followed to assist the young ladies in waiting upon the diners. An orchestra was erected on the Spout's Common, with 12 tables diverging as rays all arched and flagged by the hands*

*of the ladies of the town. Seventeen toasts at intervals of ten minutes followed the dinner; sports of a comic type came at five o'clock, then dancing; fireworks at ten bade the dancing cease and with their last flash the happy day expired.”*

There was no festival following the battle of Waterloo – only thanksgiving at the church. Presumably they didn't want to tempt Providence again.

Monica White

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## Contributors

**Ronald Beresford Dew** was formerly Director of Manchester University' School of Management – now retired to Wiveton and enjoying it.

**Frank Hawes** is a retired architect who has been in Cley for the last twenty years.

**Jonathan Hooton** teaches geography and environmental science at Notre Dame School, Norwich. He is probably better known here as the author of *The Glaven Ports*.

**Richard Jefferson**, former cricketer and teacher, is an avid collector of things historical, especially those relating to the Glaven Valley.

**John Peake**, biologist, formerly worked in the Natural History Museum, London; has many early links with north Norfolk.

**Pamela Peake**, author, lecturer and formerly adult education tutor; has a long-time fascination for social history.

**Donald J B White** is a Fellow of University College, London, and was formerly Reader in Botany at the College.

**John White** was curator and botanist at Westonbirt Arboretum, a Forestry Commission Research Dendrologist; now works as a freelance writer and consultant.

**Monica White** is a botanist and formerly lectured at University College, London.