



BAHS Newsletter

Number 12

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The Shape of Things to Come!



The new Reading Room as seen on the 18th November. Since then there has been considerable progress, as recounted by Peter Wordingham below. This image is in fact History!

Progress is now being made with the extension to Blakeney Village Hall: foundations, sub-floor, doorways and many courses of brickwork have been laid. Completion appears to be on schedule for the end of February 2002.

Our History Reading Room for Society and community use has attracted much interest and favourable comment as we have gone through grant procedures, as well as contributing towards Blakeney's success in the EDP and Daily Telegraph Village of the Year competition. The overall financing of the whole project – which includes space for the Village Hall, the Blakeney Players, as well as the History Society – has a shortfall of £4500, so further appeals for grant aid are being made to cover this sum.

Additional grants are being processed for equipment and furnishings. Our progress will be reported in the next newsletter, together with

room layout plans. Meanwhile should you wish to contribute to our efforts in any way your committee would dearly love to hear from you.

PW

Good Deeds

The Society has recently received, or has been permitted to copy, several sets of property deeds relating to Blakeney. These are a wonderful resource for our growing village archive and our heartfelt thanks go to the donors, Messrs Long, Wheeler and Williams.

If anyone else has deeds they no longer need, or is prepared to let the Society make a copy, *please* get in touch.

Reports of Recent BAHS Meetings

The Shame and Degradation of Local Victorian Poverty

Howard Fears

After the Society's AGM on 18 September, members and friends were invited by **Howard Fears** to imagine themselves destitute in the first half of the 19th century. What could one do when it was no longer possible to keep body and soul together? The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act had the answer: apply to the MoH for the necessary paperwork, walk miles to the nearest Workhouse, submit to being searched, stripped and washed down in disinfectant, and then put on regulation Workhouse clothing. These indignities were followed by others, chief among them the segregation of family members for all but an hour each week. There was separate accommodation for men, women, boys, girls, and especially unmarried mothers who were given the strictest segregation and the hardest jobs.

The house rules were also onerous: no possessions, a strict daily regime, rations barely half those supplied to prisons – no milk, no beer, no cutlery – and bed by 8pm. Perhaps conditions were hardest for the elderly who had no prospect of leaving, nothing to look forward to, nothing to occupy the mind. By such descriptions the speaker aimed to portray the utter degradation of life in the Workhouse.

Yet the 1834 Act was kindly meant and there were some positive results: children did get daily tuition (but unless they went to the local school they could still grow up knowing nothing of the outside world), and the sick and mentally inadequate received some assistance. And people were free to leave. If they chose to suffer the institutional deprivations it was because material conditions inside were still better than those outside.

Howard's talk was enlivened by slides provided by **Philip West**, although illustrations of the early days of the Workhouse are very few. Some of the imposing workhouse buildings still stand in Norfolk, and a full treatment of the subject is given in Anne Digby's "Pauper Palaces" published in 1978.

JW

Holt Before the Fire

Michael Barrett

On 30th October **Michael Barrett**, formerly head of Geography at Gresham's School, gave us a talk on the history of Holt, starting at the "beginning" and ending with the fire of 1708.

But when was the beginning? Worked flints, Bronze Age burial mounds, and the Iron Age Warham Camp show this area has been occupied for thousands of years. But if any of them lived on the defensible site of Spout Hills the evidence is lacking. Then came the Romans who built a road from Salthouse to Holt (now Peacock Lane) and beside it a villa. Did the Romans have the first settlement here? Or was it the Anglo-Saxons who first built a village on the site and named it Holt (meaning a "wood")? Whatever the origins, by the time of Domesday in 1086 Holt was the centre of a royal manor, with outlying holdings in both Blakeney and Cley. The nearby village of Newton has been lost, and the speaker offered a small reward for anyone who could demonstrate where it once lay.

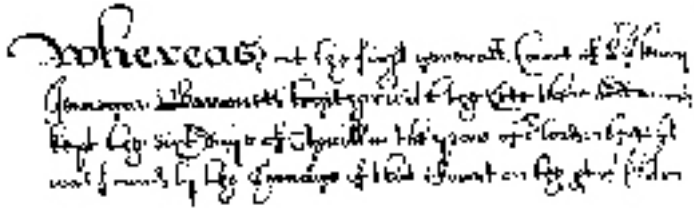
The population of Holt increased over the centuries from perhaps 250 in 1086 to 1000 in 1801, although outbreaks of disease, plague especially, ensured that the trend was not continually upward. The town was an early market centre – and one of the very few markets to be mentioned in Domesday – but the old rectangular market place between Bull Street and Market Place has been lost to infilling.

The Black death of 1349 led to a shortage of labour, rising wages and the loosening of manorial ties – and ultimately to the peasants' revolt of 1381. There was trouble too during the Civil War when a Royalist rebellion was led by William Hobart.

And the fire in 1708? Not quite as extensive as formerly believed but around 100 houses were destroyed, mostly on the southern side of the market place. On the north side some older houses still exist behind later façades – "Byfords" is a prime example. Michael let slip that a book would result from his extensive research so members should make sure they buy it when the time comes.

JW

Can you Read This?



If not you either need a new pair of glasses, or you should have attended our very successful Palaeography Weekend held on the 10/11th November in Blakeney. Led by Paul Rutledge, we worked our way through the four main handwriting styles – the Bastard, the Secretary, the Round, and the Court Hands – gently guided by our excellent tutor. And, lo and behold, at the end of the weekend we *could* read this (and worse). Our progress was aided by all the documents being in English...next stop medieval Latin!

Reading Room

The existing Reading Room in the Portakabin is now shut for the winter. Urgent viewing of records is possible by special arrangement with Pam Peake – phone 01263 740388. Normal service will be resumed on the last Tuesday in February.

Done any Yarking Lately?

Yes, Yarking. You'll remember that in Newsletter 10 the note of David White's talk on the Holt Lowes woodland reported his query about the sport of "yarking" enjoyed at the country fair held there in the 18th century. But who enjoyed the sport most – the participants or the spectators?

Our member for Canada, Gillian Sandeman, has suggested a promising line of enquiry. "Yark" and "yerk" are used interchangeably in dialect English (and Scottish – prevalent in the Orkneys) with a fairly wide range of meanings, all having to do with sudden or jerky movements.

One of the uses, among many listed in the OED, has to do with horses. The most pertinent quotation cited is: "The horse never gave over flinging, yarking, plunging and bownding..." So she wonders whether this usage was preserved in Norfolk dialect and whether the Holt sports included a challenge to see how long a rider could stay on an unbroken horse, which would no doubt be bucking or yarking in an attempt to unseat him.

This is, of course, still a sport at North American stampedes, particularly Calgary, and there are also vicious mechanical horses on which you can try the skill. So perhaps yarking was one of the horse sports, along with the racing?

This suggestion is being pursued further and no doubt the results will appear in a future Newsletter.

JW

Stop Press!

Norfolk County Maps (27th November)
Richard Jefferson

Before Richard gave his talk we had an hour to spend individually examining a fine display of maps of Norfolk, searching for changes in road patterns, the spelling of village names (Clay or Cly to Cley), following the strip road maps for travellers and testing our knowledge of the dates of laying railway lines. There was a tiny 1643 square map which included a grid scale of distances, similar to those in modern road maps. We saw a set of cartographer's playing cards. Helpful reference books on display included Thomas Chubb's 1937 Key for County Maps, British Museum publications by R. A. Skelton, (1970s) and Donald Hodgeson (1980s), and Yasha Beresiner's British County Maps.

Maps available for today's collector have survived from several sources. Often old atlases or illustrated books have become delapidated, not worth repairing. These are known as "breakers" and the plates are removed and sold individually. Maps were also issued with magazines and could be printed individually for a particular area. The collector should be wary of late original prints taken from old worn plates, and those laid on board which may have become discoloured.

With the aid of slides we saw maps of the first survey of English counties by Christopher Saxton (1570s), followed in 1610 by John Speed, whose atlas (1675) maps were re-issued up to the 1770s. Frequently the same maps appear with variations in the cartouches, inset detailed sketches and vanity insertions of local gentry's coats of arms. A 1680 map, repeated in 1753, lost ornamental tokens and had additional roads. The 17th century was the great age for Dutch cartographers. The name of the North Sea varies from 'German Ocean', to 'British Ocean', and 'British Channel', and texts on the reverse of the maps can be in Latin, French, German or Dutch, as well as English. John Ogilby introduced strip road maps in 1675, which read from right to left, bottom to top of the page. These, measured by wheeled way-winders, were often marked in furlongs and show landmarks visible from the road. There were inevitable inaccuracies.

In the mid 18th century the Royal Society of Arts encouraged large scale maps of England and Wales, and at the end of the century Faden produced his 1" to the mile Map of Norfolk which was later followed by similar Ordnance Survey maps, backed on linen and giving greater and more accurate detail.

HB

Many thanks to Helen for producing this review in double quick time .

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Spring/Summer Programme 2002

The membership subscription remains unchanged, but there will be a modest charge of £1 for members attending the meetings whilst all non-members, that is guests and visitors alike, will be charged £2. There will be no additional charge for Refreshments. In this way we will be able to finance speakers from further afield and meet their travel expenses.

Lectures

All meetings (unless otherwise stated) are held on Tuesdays in the Methodist Chapel, High Street, Blakeney, and start at 7.30pm.

Jan 29th Recollections from around the Glaven, a series of short talks by Richard Newton, Colin Cobon and Janet Harcourt.

Saturday 9th February, 9.00am
"Field Walking" with Eric Hotblack. Meet in the Chapel for introduction before moving into the field for the rest of the morning. Cost £2.50 – **prebooking essential** – phone 01263 740388.

Feb 26th "History of the RNLI and tales of the North Norfolk lifeboats"
by Michael Softley.

Mar 26th "Wigs & Waistcoats – Historical dress in Norfolk"
by Mary Alexander

Saturday April 20th at Blakeney Village Hall
"Coastal Change and Rising Sea Levels"
by Professor Andrew Watkinson of the UEA.
This is a joint meeting with the Norfolk Wildlife Trust – note the change of day and venue.

May 14th **2pm at Baconsthorpe Castle**
"Outing to Baconsthorpe"
led by Tom Warboys.
Baconsthorpe, source of the

Glaven River and sometime home of the Heydon family whose very own Sir Christopher Heydon was also Lord of the Manor of Cley. This can be a whole day outing with lunch at Margarets in the village, or just a half day if you wish to join the guided tour in the afternoon. There will be a small charge to cover costs. Meet in the castle car park at 2pm.

Golden Jubilee Weekend 1st-4th June
Exhibition in the Methodist Chapel and the History Reading Room (all being well).

Saturday 20th July at 8pm at Blakeney VH
"A Tapestry of Norfolk Villages"
by Chris Barringer.

The UEA Course

Rural Buildings in the Landscape
by Susanna Wade Martins, starting on Monday 14th January, 2pm Methodist Chapel.

What better way to start the New Year than by enrolling on a course of scintillating lectures that will help you to understand the variety and arrangement of buildings in the countryside. From village layouts to village schools, churches on the skyline to chapels tucked away in valleys, great estates and scattered farm houses with all their attendant barns and outhouses, all will be revealed. This is our annual UEA course of 10 meetings including an outing. Comfortable space is limited so book your place now on 01263 741063. Cost £55.

PP

Those of you embarked on a UEA extra-mural certificate or diploma may like to know that this is an accredited course that will count (10 credits) towards your qualification.