



BAHS Newsletter

Number 15

July 2003



Chris Barringer and Bernard Crowe cut the BAHS cake watched by a hungry co-Chairman.

EGM Results

The brief Extraordinary General Meeting, held immediately prior to Gerald Cubbitt's talk on Salthouse, agreed to the adoption of the "new" constitution – basically just a few minor tweaks in the light of experience gained from the first months of running the History Centre. We hope to have copies of the full revised constitution available for the AGM in September for anyone who wants one.

The meeting also agreed to the Committee's recommendation that the subscription for the coming year (July 2003 onwards) should be increased to £10 for individuals and £14 for family membership. This was deemed to be necessary as projected costs for core member services such as Newsletters and the Glaven Historian were outstripping income from subscriptions, despite steadily increasing membership numbers. The Committee want to avoid too much cross-subsidisation of different activity areas, which is Management-speak for not wanting to rob Peter to pay Paul. We also want to be able expand and improve membership services.

It's Official: We're Open!

The dust has finally settled on our 9th March Opening Day shindig. Chris Barringer and Bernard Crowe jointly plunged the knife deep into the heart of the err...cake. Several bottles of wine (and even more cartons of orange juice, it being rather early in the day) were consumed by the invited guests.

But the best surprise was the afternoon session when the exhibition in the Scout hut was open to all and sundry. A constant flow of people, largely but not exclusively local, came to view the exhibition and to see the facilities in the History Centre: the almost universal reaction was one of surprise and delight that such knowledge and material was now so readily available in the village. The History Centre looks set to become a valuable community resource.

A reminder to members that the Centre is open from 10am to 12 noon on the first and last Tuesday of the month. Access at other times is by arrangement with the committee: contact 01263 740388 or 01263 741063 for bookings.

A small charge is levied for use of the machinery and equipment, and an even smaller charge for other access, so that the Centre can be self supporting and not a drag on the general membership fund. Any surplus generated will be used to buy more material for the History Centre: there is still plenty of interesting material out there.

Membership Renewal Slip

Name:

Address:

Individual £10 Family £14
(delete as appropriate)

Please send with remittance to Hon Treasurer,
Anne Maw, 2 Wiveton Road, Blakeney, NR25 7NJ

Notes on recent meetings

Aspects of Salthouse

Gerald Cubitt

In March Gerald talked to us about Salthouse, the village where he was born and where his family had lived for generations. He showed slides from his collection of old photographs and postcards, supplemented with his own photos taken between 1989 - 2002.

The village is set in a chalk bay, natural springs giving fresh water. We saw former wells at Manor House, the Dun Cow, Ivy Hall and the Bake House. To the north the marshes are fronted by two miles of foreshore. The village itself lies low, and has been flooded many times. The land to the south rises to heath-land, with Walsey, Gramborough and Bard Hills.

We saw a photo of the marshes and the boat used by the Coastguards when their path was flooded. Here the beasts were brought to drink and the women did their washing. On the horizon we could see tiny dots - old railway carriages used as beach houses.

For me he answered a question often posed by my grandchildren. The metal mounted lumps of concrete up on the heath-lands, I now know, are the remains of a former pylon, destroyed by a damaged Lancaster bomber returning from Germany. The crew all died.

He then took us through the village, pointing out striking ornamental brick and flint work on gable walls of both barns and houses, many of which bore 18th century date marks - was this work the signature of a local builder? Some of the barns are now converted to homes. Earlier photos of their roof trusses showed the use of ships' timbers - in Cross Street barn these were 23'6" across, a substantial ship! Early photos of the Dun Cow showed barns which once housed stables and a blacksmith's shop.

Then we saw the big houses. A substantial staff group was pictured at Ivy Hall, and we were shown the now bricked up entrance where men used to get their wages. In a photo of the Manor House we could distinguish roof tiles of different periods, and we admired the remains of the cross (flood damaged) which had been sensitively re-sited in the garden from Cross Street.

Gerald told many stories about the flooding which has so often hit the village. There was a photo of Ruth Holman, who lived through the 1897 Rage, and had described her experiences to Jane Hales. At that time Jarvis, the miller, had been trapped in the mill, together with many displaced rats, while other villagers sheltered up the hill in the church porch. Much damage was later caused in the 1953 storms.

In the interval we were able to enjoy a splendid display offering a preview of 'Salthouse - the story of a Norfolk Village', which will be published in July this year - a must for anyone interested in history of this area.

HCB

Veteran Trees in North Norfolk

John White

Until recently John White was the Forestry Commission's research dendrologist, responsible for the scientific input to national tree collections. In February he spoke to the Society about trees in general and old trees in particular. Veteran trees cannot be weakened by boring holes to count the rings (dendrochronology) so John has pioneered methods for dating trees by reference to their size, appearance and location in relation to the known habits of each species, and looking at the records of some 120,00 trees in the process.

When he came in brandishing a block of wood taken from a tree on the Bayfield Estate that had started life in 1346, we sensed that a good talk was in prospect - and so it proved. Oaks featured prominently. As a generalisation, they grow for 200 years, stay in their prime for 200 years, then gradually decline over another 200, though burrs on the trunks can send out new shoots and prolong the life of the tree. Even dead they can still stand for 50 years. Some of the Sherwood Forest oaks are c.1000 years old but are being vandalised because their hollow trunks make inviting chimneys in which to light fires. Death by this means is not inevitable, though, and the 'Major Oak' is one that has survived such a fire.

The biggest oak known dates from 1023, but the 'Newland Oak' is, or rather was, the oldest, having lived from AD 656 to the 1950s; a young plant lives on with same genetic material. The Boscobel Oak is one that the future Charles II hid in. Destroyed by souvenir hunters, this tree also lives on as young plants obtained from surviving fragments of the old. Kett's Oak at Wymondham can't possibly be, as it dates from around 1850 (though it could be a re-growth), but the Kett's Oak at Ryston is c.1000 years old and so would have been a large tree in Kett's time. A slide, one of many, showed it to be massive and bulbous and full of character.

Evergreen Oaks at Holkham are known to have originated from the packaging round marble brought in to build the Hall soon after 1734. The sculptured trunk of one planted in 1753 is reckoned the best example in the country. Trees in some other parks also have known planting dates, eg 1580 in Kimberley Park. The sycamore was first recorded in England in an Oxford church carving of c.1280. The tree seems to have originated in Wales, a rare example of a eastward movement when the usual route for post-glacial colonisation was directly from Europe. A very old sycamore stands in the grounds of Stiffkey Old Hall. Beeches live only about half as long as oaks - and don't stand beneath one for too long as healthy-seeming branches can sometimes give way without warning. Yew trees don't conform to the usual pattern

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of growth and can be very old. The Selborne Yew was measured regularly for over 200 years until it blew down in the gale of 1987 (exposing graves beneath). It lived for about three years after being uprighted but didn't survive, except in the form of cuttings.

Lime and hazel, if coppiced regularly, can live almost indefinitely – even up to 6,000 years, back towards the time of their first introduction from Europe. The Small Leaved Lime provided 'inden bast', a cordage strong enough to be useful, and though knowledge of it has disappeared from Britain its strength has been demonstrated from a source in Germany. Elm is essentially a single clone, and therefore susceptible to virulent disease. There was a substantial elm decline in the Neolithic period – it recovered then and no doubt will do so again. Hawthorn may not look as substantial as other trees but can still live for up to 400 years. The Black Poplar was thought to be an endangered species until the speaker initiated a national 'hunt' which brought many examples to light – including one in the local village in which he is now putting down his own roots.

There were comments too on the inner life of trees; how bark grows inwards and dies at the outer surface, and how tree-rings become thinner in maturity because the same volume of new wood produced each year has to be spread round a greater circumference. There is a tree in Felbrigg Park which has an inner life all of its own: it sometimes speaks to children who pass by, courtesy of a man and megaphone walled up in the hollow trunk!

After this fluent talk by the master of his subject we were left in no doubt that veteran trees all have a particular character and that each is a living link to our own history.

JW

The Heydons of Baconsthorpe

David Yaxley

Reciting a genealogy is not an easy way to keep an audience amused but David Yaxley managed it with some aplomb, assisted by the notoriety of some of his characters and his own pithy asides.

The Heydons had a rapid rise to prominence in the fifteenth century largely through the (mis)practice of the Law. They were contemporaries of the Pastons in whose letters they had a bad press at least till the end of the 1400s. The first Heydon was no Heydon at all but one William Baxter who appears to have taken the name of the north Norfolk village to position himself amongst such august families as the Pastons, Calthorpes and Greshams - so far as is known he had no connection with Heydon. William was a lawyer who married well but soon ran into marital problems: he refused to recognise a second child as his own and had his wife 'put away', divorce then being difficult to obtain.

His elder son, John Heydon, was also a lawyer and is particularly remembered for his partnership with Sir Thomas Tuddenham. This partnership became a byword for illegal practice but they did very well financially under their patron, the Duke of Suffolk. After he lost his head Heydon and Tuddenham managed to keep theirs until 1460 when both were indicted for treason. Tuddenham was executed in 1462 but Heydon survived to die in 1479. Included in John Heydon's activities were his bribery of judges (common at the time), his use of a posse of armed men to enforce his will, and the first building at Baconsthorpe.

The next Heydon, Sir Henry, extended Baconsthorpe castle substantially, and much of what survives dates from his time. He, too, was a lawyer and was also steward to the Duchess of York. He married Anne Boleyn, who was to be great aunt of the Anne Boleyn. Their daughter Bridget married Sir William Paston, which signalled a diminution in the feud between the two families.

And so to the next heir, Sir John Heydon, with his great flocks of sheep, whose eldest son, Sir Christopher, predeceased him by ten years. The next Sir Christopher was a Commissioner for church goods at the Dissolution, no doubt a profitable position, and also High Sheriff for the county. He completed Baconsthorpe castle during the 1550s but had debts of c£2500 when he died in 1579. He was said to have been associated with Catholic plots, but this seems unlikely; his wife certainly had Puritan tendencies.

Christopher may not have been on good terms with his son, Sir William, who complained that he had been left too little to maintain the estate and who already had debts of his own. William, a Puritan, was appointed Commissioner to enforce the Act of Uniformity in Norfolk and took part in the search of Oxborough Hall which failed to find well-hidden Catholic recusants. Yet another of the unruly Heydons, he attacked and occupied Saxlingham Hall, legally held by his step-mother (the Heydons had built it originally). The purchase of the office of Vice Admiral of Norfolk seems to have brought him no great profit as by 1590 he was in serious trouble from his creditors and had to sell some property to meet debts. His son complained that some of this was entailed to him by his grandfather, and brought a case against his father, also designed to stop his father pulling down Baconsthorpe Castle. Sir William died in 1594 with debts of over £4000.

The son, Sir Christopher, also plagued by debts, had to sell land worth over £400 in annual rents. He lived at Mannington Hall, having acquired it by marriage to the widow of John Potts, and pulled down part of Baconsthorpe. David called him 'one of the most interesting Heydons', not just a euphemism for the Heydon tradition of warring with the neighbours but an acknowledgement of his interest in cultural matters. He wrote books on astrology – one with a title so long as to be unintelligible to most of David's audience - and

constructed for his wife in Saxlingham church a 'vast monument of pyramidal form covered with emblems and hieroglyphics' (since demolished). He died in 1623.

Henceforward the Heydon fortunes declined rapidly. The next heir, Sir William, killed on a military expedition in 1627, left no descendants. His brother, Sir John Heydon, was also a soldier – but on the 'wrong' side in the Civil War. Baconsthorpe was sequestered by the Parliamentarians and although Sir John was able to buy it back he then pulled much of it down in order to sell the materials – and perhaps to fund the purchase. His sons, William and Christopher, both died without issue, bringing an end to the colourful Heydon line after a long period of debts.

David followed his talk with slides of Baconsthorpe Castle and Mannington Hall, and of what could be seen of Saxlingham Hall before the ruins were recently incorporated into a private house.

Baconsthorpe has an outer gatehouse which was the last part of the site to be occupied – part collapsed in 1920 while (rumour has it) the occupants were at church. The rest of the castle now consists of the delapidated inner gatehouse, set in walls enclosing a square courtyard, the whole tightly surrounded by a moat. David showed his interpretation of how the site may have looked: a main hall, a subsidiary block and a wool processing factory inside the walled area, and gardens outside the moat.

Some architectural details were also illustrated: good quality knapped flint on the gatehouse as a thin skin over rubble walls, the remains of fireplaces, staircases, and privy closets draining to the moat, arrow slits in the earliest section of the walls and gunports elsewhere, and robbed out stonework.

John Cucksey thanked the speaker on behalf of the audience.

JW

The Work of a Stonemason

Nina Bilbey

By projecting a series of images of masons at work taken from medieval manuscripts and miniatures Nina Bilbey was able to point out how the tools in use in the illustrations were identical to those she had brought with her and which she used every day.

She then described the training and dedication to their craft of these masons and it soon became clear that the tools were not the only similarities being demonstrated to us. After her arts degree and several years of teaching she had obtained a scholarship from the Worshipful Company of Carpenters to train as a stonemason. She told us how her first task as a trainee banker mason involved producing a flat surface on the top of a one metre square block of stone, and how, to a

mason, 'flat' means that no light at all must leak under the instructor's steel straightedge when he comes to check your work. It can take a beginner three months to produce an acceptable cube; a task that a working mason would be expected to produce in a few hours. From flat surfaces and straight arrisses a mason goes on to produce traditional mouldings medieval and classical and then to carve foliage, figures and other decorative elements.

Since her training Nina has worked on a number of buildings including Hereford Cathedral and now the Palace of Westminster where she is currently replacing weathered parts of the roof and keeping Tory Whips from dozing in their office below her.

She answered questions about the uses of various tools and the characteristics of different stones by showing slides of carvings from the Romanesque Museum in Barcelona. Her skill was clear from the small examples of her work she had been able to bring with her, and her infectious enthusiasm left us all full of admiration for her commitment to the traditions and standards of her chosen craft and looking forward to an opportunity to visit her workshop/studio in Wells-next-the-Sea.

FH

Help Wanted!

The BAHS is going from strength to strength. The monthly meetings regularly fill the Methodists' chapel, the UEA courses are well attended, the Glaven Historian is gaining an excellent reputation among other historians, and now the Newsletter is expanding to six pages.

Organising the monthly speakers, running the History Centre, and all the myriad jobs that have to be done to keep the Society functioning at such a high level of activity is *an awful lot of work*. This work falls onto very few members – and the load is beginning to tell!

The Committee desperately needs new blood. There are several vacancies that really need to be filled before the AGM in September by members willing to become more actively involved in the running of the BAHS. You don't need a degree in History, but you do need enthusiasm and a bit of spare time. A computer, and the know-how to use it, would be useful, but not essential.

Please don't be shy! Contact Pam Peake (01263 740388) or Richard Kelham (01263 740186) if you want to know more.

Editor: Richard Kelham, phone/fax: 01263 740186
ISDN: 01263 740147
e-mail: richard.kelham@dial.pipex.com

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Summer/Autumn Programme 2003

Lectures

All meetings (unless otherwise stated) are held on Tuesdays in the Methodist Chapel, High Street, Blakeney, and start at 7.30pm. There is a modest charge of £1 for members, £2 for visitors, which includes refreshments.

**Saturday
Jul 19th** Annual Summer Lecture
Blakeney Village Hall, 8pm
The Sutton Hoo Burial Treasures
by Margaret Forrester
(entrance fee £2 for all)

Sept 16th Annual General Meeting
followed by:
The Roman Coastline
by David Gurney

Oct 28th *Aspects of Norfolk*
by Cliff Crawley

Nov 25th *A Port in Decline: Ships of the
last 50 years of the Glaven ports*
by Jonathan Hooton

**Jan 27th
2004** *Local Colour*
(speakers to be announced)

Field Work and Outings

**Saturday
Oct 4th** *A walk through History on the
Bayfield Estate*
led by John White

A 4 hour walk starting at 1.30pm. Cost £4.
Booking is essential as numbers are limited
(01263 740388)

UEA Autumn Series:

The Golden Age of Anglo-Norman Art and Architecture 1090-1170

Margaret Forrester continues on from her very successful course held last autumn. This course will explore the unprecedented flowering of the visual arts from church and castle design to manuscript painting that followed the initial impact of the Normans. Particular emphasis will be placed on East Anglian Cathedrals (Norwich, Ely and Peterborough), Castles, round tower churches, Wymondham and Binham Priors.

The course starts on Monday 6th October and continues every Monday for 9 more weeks. The classes will be held at the Methodist Chapel, 2pm - 4pm.

Book your seat in advance with the Secretary on 01263 741063 to avoid disappointment.

The History Centre

A programme of events has been planned for the History Centre which includes Open Days, introductory tours of the resources, induction courses for intending volunteers, and several very interesting and challenging Short Courses.

Open Days

**Thursdays August 7th and August 28th
10am - 3.30pm**

- Come and see the latest additions to the resources.
- Share one - Get one! Let us make an instant copy of your old postcards or photographs for the BAHS collection and get a copy for yourself.
- Ask about the programme of events.
- Find elusive ancestors on the 1881 Census.

Short Courses

Parish Councils: 100 years of Success!

Three lectures covering events leading up to the 1894 Local Government Act. The separation of Church and Civil administration; the trials and tribulations of the new order with many local examples and events; such as the abolition of the Poor Rate established in 1601, incorporated in 1894 and replaced by the Council Tax in 1990! Just the course to start you on your way with local history of the recent past. **Booking is essential** as space is limited.

Mondays, September 8th, 15th, and 22nd.
2pm - 4pm Fee: £10

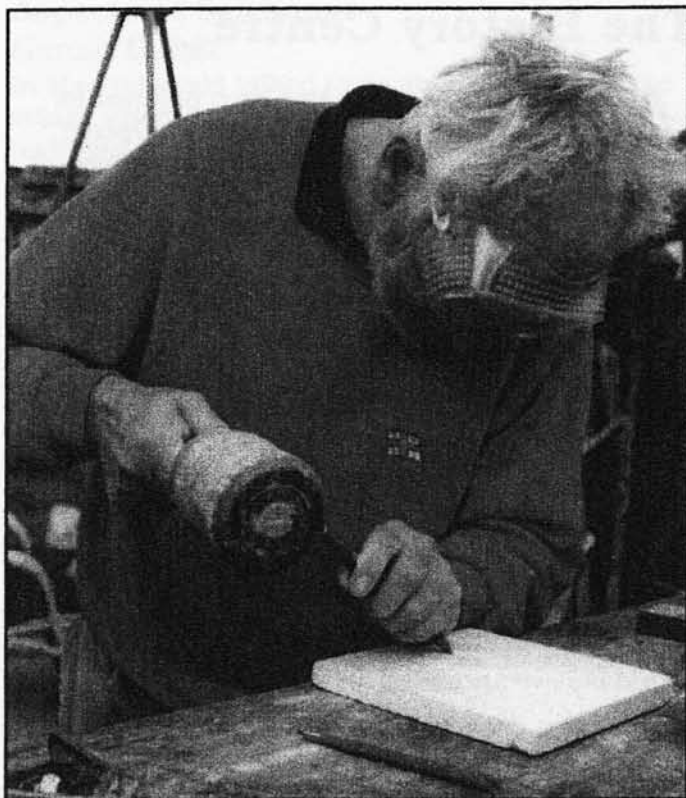
Researching Glaven Shipping

by Jonathan Hooton

This is a practical course for those with an interest in ship research, ship owners and mariners. Sources for research (many held by BAHS) will be explored and case histories followed with students learning together and sharing problems and successes of research. Emphasis will be on 19th Century shipping but the principles apply equally to other centuries and other north Norfolk ports.

The course will be held on Wednesday evenings starting February 25th, continuing March 3rd and 10th, followed by individual research in your own time, or at the History Centre on some Wednesday evenings, with a catch up session on April 21st, and a final session later in the year. Final details regarding venue and cost will depend on numbers of students attending, so please indicate your interest in plenty of time.

Mason's Workshop



A small group of BAHS members were privileged to enjoy an afternoon workshop with the talented young stonemason, Nina Bilbey, at Wells. This was preceded by an open session at Wells church and its associated graveyard.

Nina explained the cutting of the headstones and how, ideally, the stone used should be in its original bedded state – as laid down all those millions of years before. As headstones tend to be about 3 feet tall with an additional 30% submerged, you can see that deep beds of stone are needed in the quarry.

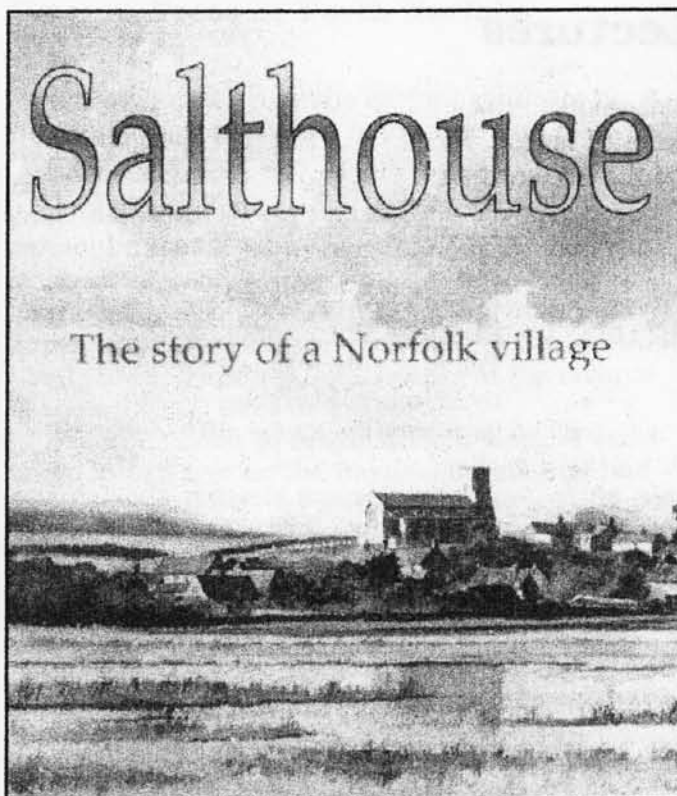
In reality such beds are rarely found, so many stones were cut diagonally or even vertically bedded, though these are liable to decay faster. But the all too common sight of the facing layer of stone – the interesting bit with the inscription – peeling off is normally due to natural case hardening of the stone combined with freeze-thaw action. There were a couple of headstones in slate, rare for this area, demonstrating what a beautiful stone it is for letter cutting. Vertically bedded too!

After the graveyard, the church. Much of the church was destroyed by fire and rebuilt in the Victorian era. The internal carving appeared – to the practiced eye of a stonemason – to have been done in a hurry, with that in the aisles unfinished. "Done to a price" Nina said.

For the afternoon session we saw the tools Nina had shown us during her lecture (see Frank Hawes' report) in action. Somehow, in the space of a couple of hours, she taught a bunch of rank amateurs to use these tools and to produce almost passable examples of classic Trajan script.

Bless!

Book Preview



Commander Frank Noel Stagg fell in love with Salthouse in the 1930s when he visited his sister and two brothers-in-law, the Champion de Crespignys, who lived in Salthouse Hall. He spent many years researching the history of Salthouse from the earliest times up until the mid-nineteenth century.

The manuscript of his work has been discovered and is now being published together with living memorabilia both written and recorded by the people of Salthouse. Read about:

The old channel which connected Salthouse to the sea; the famous Rocket House on the beach, and Onesiphorous Randall who built it; The naked ten-year old bullock herd; sea-fishing; eel babbing; the intimate, personal accounts of the people of Salthouse young and old, past and present.

This 368 page, soft back book is to be published on 18 July and will cost £15, but pre-publication orders will be available at only £12 post free.

Contact Val Fiddian at The Old Bakery, Coast Road, Salthouse, NR25 7AJ, or phone 01263 741179. A copy has been promised for the Blakeney History Centre.

In connection with the above there is to be an exhibition in St Nicholas' Church, Salthouse, from the 17 August to the 16 September, entitled "Salthouse, the Story". This exhibition is sponsored by the Local Heritage Initiative – a partnership between the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency. Car parking will be available on the Green and in Cross Street – or take the bus!