



BAHS Newsletter

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Does anyone remember the Whirlygig?

Those who frequent the coastal path at Stiffkey – or locals with long memories – will know that on the edge of the marsh there is a tarmac circle with a pole at its centre. It is known locally as the Whirlygig and villagers in the 1950s knew it as the launch-pad for radio-controlled planes. These were often called 'Queen Bees' a name borrowed from their larger counterparts used at Weybourne during the war. The problem now is that no-one seems to remember what the Stiffkey planes looked like, how they were operated, or even when!

Fred Butcher is trying to fill this gap in our local history, but is finding it very difficult. He is therefore asking Society members for their help.

He believes that RCATs (Radio-Controlled Aerial Targets) were used at Stiffkey by the US army during 1953 and 1954 as targets for AA guns, but no US records seem to be available. The aircraft appear to have been Radioplane 19s with a 12 foot wingspan and a top speed of 200 mph. They were launched from a trolley propelled by a 72hp engine inside the aircraft and were released at about 85 mph, to be recovered either by parachute or when shot down. One landed on the roof of a house in Stiffkey, and another demolished the door of a domestic garage.



A Radioplane 19, mounted on its trolley, is prepared for take-off. The engine has been started and a technician is adjusting the fuel rate while his colleague is ready to remove the tether. The plane will accelerate around the track until it reaches take-off velocity when it will be released from the trolley and go into free flight.

Who can remember having seen them in the air or being launched? How were they brought down to the Whirlygig? Who has a photo of recovered ones lying on Blakeney Quay? And will anyone admit to having salvaged any parts!

Any information or comments either to me, please, or directly to **Fred Butcher at The Bothy, Market Street, Shipdham, IP25 7LY, telephone 01362 820101, e-mail: fred_butcher@lineone.net.** Many thanks.

John Wright



One of the wartime employees at the Radioplane factory, a Mrs Norma Jeane Dougherty, here captured by roving photographer Fred Conover for Yank magazine, in the process of fitting the propeller to a model 19. Apparently, she later changed her name and enjoyed quite a successful career in the moving pictures...

News from the History Centre

During late summer and the autumn there were two substantial guided tours of the area led by the History Centre. The first was for an international gathering of the Powditch family and the second, a two-day event, for a group of visitors keen to learn more about the mediaeval Haven. Special openings of the Centre featured descendants returning to explore the villages and family history of their forebears. These included the sons of Kenneth Allen, Gladys Jackson's nephew, Bob Pinchen's great grandson as well as Dixon, Cubitt, Thompson, Buck and Cornwall family members.

Then we had the new Priest in Charge doing some additional preparation for his lecture about to be presented to The Friends of Blakeney Church and a group from the Binham Local History Group using the facilities to explore a recently acquired film of a Binham "Dragge", dated 1576 or thereabouts.

All behind the scenes activities that show just how much news of the History Centre is getting around and how it is being used.

Open Day

Not so quiet and certainly the highlight of the summer was the annual Open Day held on a dismal gray day in late August. Was it the weather that conspired to make this day such a fantastic success with visitors and members alike? For five hours the four volunteers went through their paces, greeting and answering a whole array of questions from just under a 100 visitors. Apart from a snatched lunch, there was never a dull moment to be had. In the end, both people and resources were much too crowded for comfort, let alone safety and the format and venue will have to be changed for next year so that conversations are had less frenetically and the resources may be viewed and enjoyed more comfortably and at leisure.

Family History Class

An impromptu class was arranged for a group of members who had each individually expressed a wish to explore or start to explore some particular aspect of their family history.

Topics covered included getting started either with or without computers, the relevant questions to ask and what sources to use to find answers. The location of these sources, both locally and further afield, were identified as well as how to access and use them in the correct order.

The value of internet resources was also explored as well as the inherent pitfalls, followed by construction of trees and guidance on how to record all the information gathered, again with and without computers.

Finally, a selection of current family history software was demonstrated, their individual pros and cons discussed and the features to look out for when making a decision on which one to purchase.

These classes took place over a period of three months on a Monday afternoon and two very useful History Centre Leaflets were produced as a result, namely; **Some Internet Resources** and **Family History Software**. They cost 30p each and may be purchased from the Centre when it reopens in the New Year. The Centre will continue to open on the first Monday afternoon of the month so that family history research and guidance can take place. This will also become the new Members' session for individual research.

Accessions

Of all the purchases and donations made recently, the most notable has to be our winning bid for a complete set of Norfolk Genealogy from the NFHS. This purchase of 25 volumes, all second hand but none-the-less in wonderful condition,

was made possible by funding from the Blakeney Community Fund. Other accessions have included the following items:

A photographic collection featuring North Norfolk barns, vernacular architecture and rood screens.

Salthouse baptisms, 1542-1713, marriages, 1538-1688, and burials, 1558-1708

Thompson family history files (mss)

Maritime articles by Stammers Volumes 16 and 17 of the Local Historian

A Bibliography of Norfolk History

Modern Wills from 1858

Basic record keeping for family historians

Peerless Powditch

Blakeney and Cley Poor Rate books – filmed copies

North Greenhoe Land Tax, selection from 1782-1832

Nineteenth century Parish Registers for Field Dalling, Bale, Stiffkey, Cockthorpe, Sharrington and Gunthorpe, plus assorted parish records and Churchwarden Accounts.

Many of these items were on view at the Xmas Mardle in December, as well as sundry papers and photographs that have been deposited at the Centre.

Cockthorpe Project

Nothing happening you might think, but not so. The Land Valuation Record Plan for 1910 has now been acquired from National Archives so that the house history 'picture' of the parish has been expanded

Then one of our members revealed that as her mother was a Rice before marriage, could she just possibly be descended from the Reverend Henry Rice who came to the living in Cockthorpe some 340 years ago and even more coincidentally could she be living in the ancient family home, the Parsonage? Some months later and after attending the Family History Class, the gap is closing down. Watch this space.

Meanwhile the parish registers for Cockthorpe are being tran

scribed and an outing to All Saints Church, Upper Sheringham has been arranged. The fascination of this church is that many of the internal structures and layout are still in place and shed light on how churches were used at different periods in time. Useful information when thinking about how All Saints, Cockthorpe was used.

We have also tried 'dowsing' to find the extent of the old Chancel at Cockthorpe Church – it works!

Pam Peake



Guess where this was? OK, so no prizes, but I have to fill the gap somehow...

Subscription Renewals

If you haven't paid your subs yet, you will be deemed to have resigned from the Society. This would mean that this is the last Newsletter you will receive [sob]. And you won't receive your copy of the next Glaven Historian [wail]. If you are in default this will be indicated by a slip attached to the newsletter [gnashing of teeth].

For next year the Committee are hoping to introduce arrangements for payment by Standing Order which should make the process much less painful. OK, so that was what we said last year too – and it didn't happen – but say it often enough and one day it will! It probably makes sense to see whether there will be a subscription increase in the near future as changing standing orders is more of a pain than stumping up hard cash.

Meeting Report

Langham

by Mike Medlar

28 November 2006

Mike Medlar introduced himself as an historian by training, with a particular interest in land ownership and agriculture. His lecture was designed to show that much could be discovered about the history of a village by combining fieldwork and documentary evidence. For the post-medieval period, existing buildings and landscape features provide the most important evidence, supported by accessible records such as the Enclosure award and Tithe map.

In the Tudor period detailed land ownership records were often created when big estates changed hands, and Langham is one of those fortunate villages. Henry VIII forced the Bishop of Norwich to give up his estates in Langham and elsewhere in exchange for others, and Langham then passed from the King to Thomas Gresham and, via his daughter, to Nathaniel Bacon and the Townshends of Raynham. In this area, 'sheep/corn' husbandry prevailed; sheep belonging to the principal landowners provided wool and meat and were even more important as mobile dung spreaders. At this time some 40 families lived in Langham, and wills give a glimpse of their circumstances. A wife would be left the house and contents for her lifetime and some money would be left to children, but often provision for them had already been made. In the early 1500s, before the Reformation, much was left to charity in the form of bequests to the church, to Blakeney Friary, and to the parish Guilds (the Friendly Societies of their day). Most men who left wills were tenant farmers, some with a little land of their own.

Mike described the effect that Enclosure had on the pattern of land ownership both in general and in Langham. Big landowners usually did well from Enclosure, as did the clergy if their tithe receipts were extinguished in the

process. Other residents were awarded plots of land as compensation for the loss of their right to keep cattle on the commons. Enclosure brought changes to the landscape: straight roads with wide verges and new hedges, and fewer cross-country rights of way. With increasing mechanisation in agriculture much of rural England was over-populated by the mid-1800s, and many moved away to the industrial centres or to the colonies, sometimes assisted by the parish (as a means of reducing payments to the poor).

Mike's comments married these broad changes in rural life and landscape to his slides of Langham buildings – as seen from the street, for in taking his photographs he had not asked to see the backs of these buildings where evidence of structural changes can often be found. Some buildings have a steep roof pitch, which often indicates that it was built for thatch rather than tiles. Black pantiles were expensive and denote a prosperous owner. The Bell pub, with steep pitch and dormer windows, looks to be typical of the early 1700s. Dating can be difficult – beware datestones! – but style and decorative features are helpful: a heart-shaped brick pattern in a flint wall usually dates from the 1600s. The former 'Glass House' was once a fine threshing barn, with high doorways for loaded wagons; the built-in date of 1722 looks to be right. The walls could have been raised during a change from thatch to tile. Threshing barns were no longer needed in the 1800s with the advent of hired threshing machines, so any new ones were usually for general storage. Grain went into a granary, often denoted by the presence of an owl hole in the gable. Estate cottages were often erected in the 1800s, but not apparently in Langham.

The Legion was full for Mike's presentation, and the many visitors from Langham must surely all have heard something new about their village. Frank Hawes thanked the speaker.

John Wright

Spring/Summer Programme 2007

Events

All the meetings commence at 7.30 pm, doors open 7.00 pm, and are held in the Harbour Room, British Legion Hall in the High Street, Blakeney. Contact John Peake 01263 740388 for further details.

Entrance fee: £2 for members, £3 for visitors.

2007

Tuesday **Members Night:**

January 30 Travel to Walsingham: *Frank Hawes*
1910 Domesday Survey: *Pamela Peake*
Green Man: *Geoff Worton*

Tuesday **The Burnhams - another haven:** the archaeology and
February 27 development of a port and the villages
John Smallwood

Tuesday **'The Devil's Fiery Dance':** Books and Newspapers in
March 27 North Norfolk in the 16th century.
Clive Wilkins-Jones

Tuesday **The Early History of Norwich:** an archaeological
April 24 survey of a fine city by the pre-eminent authority
Brian Ayers

Annual Summer Public Lecture

Saturday **In Praise of Norfolk Market Towns:** there is a fine array
August 18 of market towns in the county from Downham Market in
the west, Swaffham in the south and closer to home
Holt, Fakenham and Aylsham,
Chris Barringer

Tuesday **Agriculture in North Norfolk revisited:** a view of a
Sept 25 changing scene through photographs; a return visit with
some new pictures.
Philip West
A short AGM will precede this meeting.

History Centre Diary

Reopening Tuesday, February 6: 10am till noon. Other times by arrangement.

Members' Session Monday afternoons, February 5th, March 5th and April 2nd, 2pm till 4pm. Remember there is a 50p entrance fee to cover essential heating.

All Saints Church, Upper Sheringham

Thursday This workshop will explore how the church was used
April 19 through the ages, essential information that can be
applied to features found in other local churches.

Leader *Rev Dr T Fawcett* Meet 1.30 pm at church. Cost £3.00

Numbers limited, consequently advance booking on 01263 740388 is essential.



In search of the Walsingham pilgrims...

Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Medieval England

A dozen people signed on for our BAHS/UEA course led by Matthew Champion and either 10 or 11 were there to enjoy it each week in spite of rearrangements necessitated by a couple of minor accidents in the Champion family. Probably not everyone will submit the 'required' essay but everyone seemed to enjoy the lectures.

We also had an enjoyable visit to Walsingham led jointly by Matthew and Mrs Carolyn Wright, one of the course participants who is also an accredited Walsingham Guide. We were joined on the visit by a few family and friends some of whom may be spotted in the accompanying photograph.

Frank Hawes

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