



# BAHS Newsletter

Number 39

[www.history-blakeney-area.org.uk](http://www.history-blakeney-area.org.uk)

July 2015

## Spring Outing to Castle Acre



On Tuesday 14th April, fifteen members of BAHS met together at the magnificent Cluniac Priory in Castle Acre. Our morning began with a short talk from a member of the English Heritage staff. We learnt how William de Warenne, a Norman Knight who fought at the Battle of Hastings, built the Castle at one end of the village. He introduced some monks and, in the 1090's, William's son gave them land to build a Priory at other end of the village. It is a palpably peaceful site around which we had an hour to walk, with the help of informative audio-handsets. Although there was a brisk wind, the sun shone and the medieval ruins stood proud against the blue skies.

Next, in need of refreshment,

we headed for the historic village pub called The Ostrich. Our food had been pre-ordered and we enjoyed a good meal. We were able to sit at one long table in the dining room and were looked after very well by the staff.

After lunch, we drove to Swaffham in order to visit its Museum, maintained in a listed Georgian town house. However, on reaching the mini round-about in the town centre, participants were faced with a No Entry sign near the designated car park area! This was because of unexpected roadworks which began that morning. Undeterred by such obstacles, we all managed to find alternative ways of getting to our destination. We met downstairs, by the shop which doubles up as a tourist

office. The Curator gave another short talk and explained how the Museum had recently been restored. She told us about the Swaffham Pedlar (a possible Dick Whittington?) and the 800th celebrations for the Market Place which was first mentioned in a legal document of 1215 (although it had been in existence for longer). She also put out an interesting display of flints, reminding us that the history of the area stretched back to the Stone Age. We then looked round the four museum rooms with exhibitions which ranged from the town's social history to the Egyptologist, Howard Carter, whose parents were both born in Swaffham.

*Diana Cooke.*

*Photo by John Cucksey*

# WW1, Blakeney, Explosives, Conkers, King's Lynn, and Israel.

Whilst researching two WW1 Blakeney soldiers, part of the ongoing History Centre's record of the survivors and casualties of the Great War (refer to BAHS Newsletter 38 January 2015) the Internet provided valuable information, but not all that you would wish for. Records available for research vary considerably, often the part of a document required is missing or illegible so progress is therefore difficult and time consuming. Occasionally this can lead to other interesting matters, not necessarily connected. For the writer this is one of those times ranging from a Blakeney WW1 death to the national collection of conkers and then the first president of Israel.

James Herbert Long, was the eldest of two brothers who both enlisted in WW1 and then died in very different circumstances. James was born in December 1887 and John (Jack) Long born in 1892. They were two of eleven children of George Long's family of Blakeney.

This article is about James Herbert Long, but first a little about John (Jack) Long the younger brother, he enlisted at Hempton, Norfolk, in the 2nd Battalion of the Coldstream Guards as Private 9377. He was awarded the Military Medal on 14th November 1916. Listed in Gazette issue number 29827 (page 11141) the citation for his award was not detailed as was the custom for his rank, He was later killed in action during the 2nd Battle of Cambrai on 30th November 1917 and is commemorated in the War Graves Commission British Cemetery at Gouzeaucout.

Back to James Herbert Long who enlisted on 19th April 1912 at Wells next the Sea before WW1 began, as Private 1673 in the 2nd/5th Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment. Later he was transferred to the Eastern Centre Labour Corps (ECLC) covering the Eastern counties of the Home Command with a new regimental number 161321. Though the date of transfer is not known, it is likely to have been in

response to the Army order of December 1914 mobilizing "Pioneer" battalions to support the fighting men.

From the available records James on 1st April 1918 was being considered for medical discharge, this eventually taking place on 1st August 1918. Two questions are recorded on his discharge papers: "What is the nature and locality of employment you desire?" which was answered: "Chemical Manure Works, Kings Lynn" and "Have you been employed with the colours? If so, in which capacity?" which was answered "Chemical Manure Works, Kings Lynn".

James died a few months later on 4th November 1918 at the Kings Lynn Chemical Manure Works. So far I have not found any documentation or Newspaper reports of his death, perhaps these were overshadowed by the collapse of the German Army leading to the Armistice declaration on the 11th November.

In James Long's army records there is protracted correspondence from George Long, James's father, pressing the Army to pay for his funeral, many of these documents are not complete and only tell half the story. Finally in July 1919, the Paymaster of the Labour Corps (ECLC) paid £3 15s for funeral expenses. But it did not end there, a further document detailing James Long's effects amounting to £25 3s 1d was sent to his father at the end of September 1919, this document also records against "Date & Place of Death" abbreviations that could read "Death after Discharge".

## His Majesty's Explosive Factory (HMEF)

The Kings Lynn Chemical Manure Works was not quite what the description implied. Yes, it did begin as an oil cake factory but is best described by the Society for General Microbiology web page – Acetone Production during the First World War: "In the second half of 1912, the Synthetic Products Company began

converting an oil-cake factory at Alexandra Dock in King's Lynn into an acetone plant and, with a demonstration of acetone production to Nobel's Explosives Company in November 1914, acetone production began at King's Lynn. By April 1915, Blaire, Campbell & McLean, a Glasgow company, were contacted to deliver a continuous still capable of distilling 50,000 gallons of potato mash to produce 1.4 tons of acetone and 2.2 tons of butanol per day. The still was delivered in December 1915, and was commissioned in January 1916. By March 1916, the Synthetic Products Company still had problems fulfilling their contract with the Ministry of Munitions, resulting in the British government nationalising the King's Lynn plant and renaming it His Majesty's Explosive Factory (HMEF) King's Lynn".

## Conkers

By June of 1916 Professor Weizmann of Manchester University, an organic chemist, had developed a process capable of transforming the starch of cereals, particularly of maize, into a mixture of acetone and butyl alcohol, this was applied at Kings Lynn. Later when the traditional feedstock was becoming scarce the professor found and applied an alternative feedstock at Kings Lynn, "horse chestnuts or conkers." The new feedstock requirements galvanized the nation's youth into a countrywide collection scheme but by all accounts production of acetone from this source failed to live up to expectations. (Refer to BBC's Radio 4 website for further information).

## Privatisation

The Acetone production at King's Lynn continued until closure in July 1918, decommission and privatisation followed, the Government remaining a major debenture holder of the new company. The company re-opened later for the production of "Farina", a flour type product made from potatoes using similar technology to that previously

used. Similar mills were being converted at other sites. Boston, Hull and Monikie. (Hansard of 6th March 1919 refers to these closures).

In conclusion, when considering the closure of such a process, the most hazardous period is when de-commissioning takes place. In July 1918, de-commissioning, privatisation, transfer of labour from "His Majesty's Explosive Factory" and the health implications of the acetone manufacturing, all came together.

I have little doubt that these were all contributory factors in the situation surrounding James Long's death in November 1918.

### Israel

BBC Radio 4 website noted that "Lloyd George's gratitude to Weizmann was such that it led directly to the controversial 1917 Balfour Declaration which set out British approval for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people – the state of Israel". Professor Weizmann became the first president.

*Peter Wordingham*

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## History Centre News – an accolade indeed

That the History Centre Blakeney holds village archives for Cley, Wiveton, Blakeney and, to a lesser extent the neighbouring parishes, is generally well known. Less well known is the:-

- supporting reference library
- map collection
- finding aids and indices relevant to these Glaven villages, particularly for hard to find ships, mariners, crews, pilots and coastguards
- deeds, sale particulars, auction catalogues, plans and writings relating to local properties
- Family History Folders researched by descendants and our own volunteers, often containing personal extras such as letters, documents and photographs
- the Letheringsett village archive compiled by David Mayes
- small shop selling copies of historic interest photographs, Glaven Historians, Family Biographies and more
- last, but certainly not least, a collection of unique records and

items that may only be viewed at the History Centre.

It is the significance of the latter that have recently been recognised by the Norfolk Record Office and listed on their catalogue. The Senior Archivist (Collection Development) writes *"I've added a number of references to the Blakeney History Centre and its sources, both to our online catalogue and to our searchroom card catalogue. These include references to the Blakeney School admissions register and the Cley School log book (1897-1918), Kenneth Allen brass rubbings and the Blakeney Harbour dues account book. When people search on these keywords (e.g. Blakeney School, Blakeney Harbour) they should see reference to the History Centre. I've also added references to the school records' index in the search room, and references to the History Centre in the topographical card index. We have links on our website to useful resources (<http://www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk/e-Resources/index.htm>) and often direct people in the searchroom to these links, so I've added the History Centre to the links for Buildings and Property, Families and Persons, and History"*.

Will this mean many more visitors rushing up to the coast during the summer when we are open every Tuesday morning, I wonder? You will find details of opening hours and days listed on the Back Page together with details for making contact and reserving your place.

*Pamela Peake*

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## Glaven Historian on the BAHS website

The printed copies of *Glaven Historians 8* are in short supply. Rather than reprint (again) it has been decided to make GH8 available as a digital copy on the website. For those who would like a printed copy there are a few available for purchase at the History Centre and the Crabpot bookshop in Cley.

Go to the website at [www.history-blakeney-area.org.uk](http://www.history-blakeney-area.org.uk) for further details.

## Subscriptions

A reminder that subscriptions fall due on the 1 July – an odd time of year I know but there was a good reason for it originally, if only I could remember what it was.

Rates are unchanged for yet another year at:

Individuals	£10
Couples	£14
Corporates	£25

Payment can be made by cheque, bank notes/specie, gold doubloons (no change given).

Postal payments to:  
Jenn Savage  
18 Meadow Close,  
Holt, NR25 6JP

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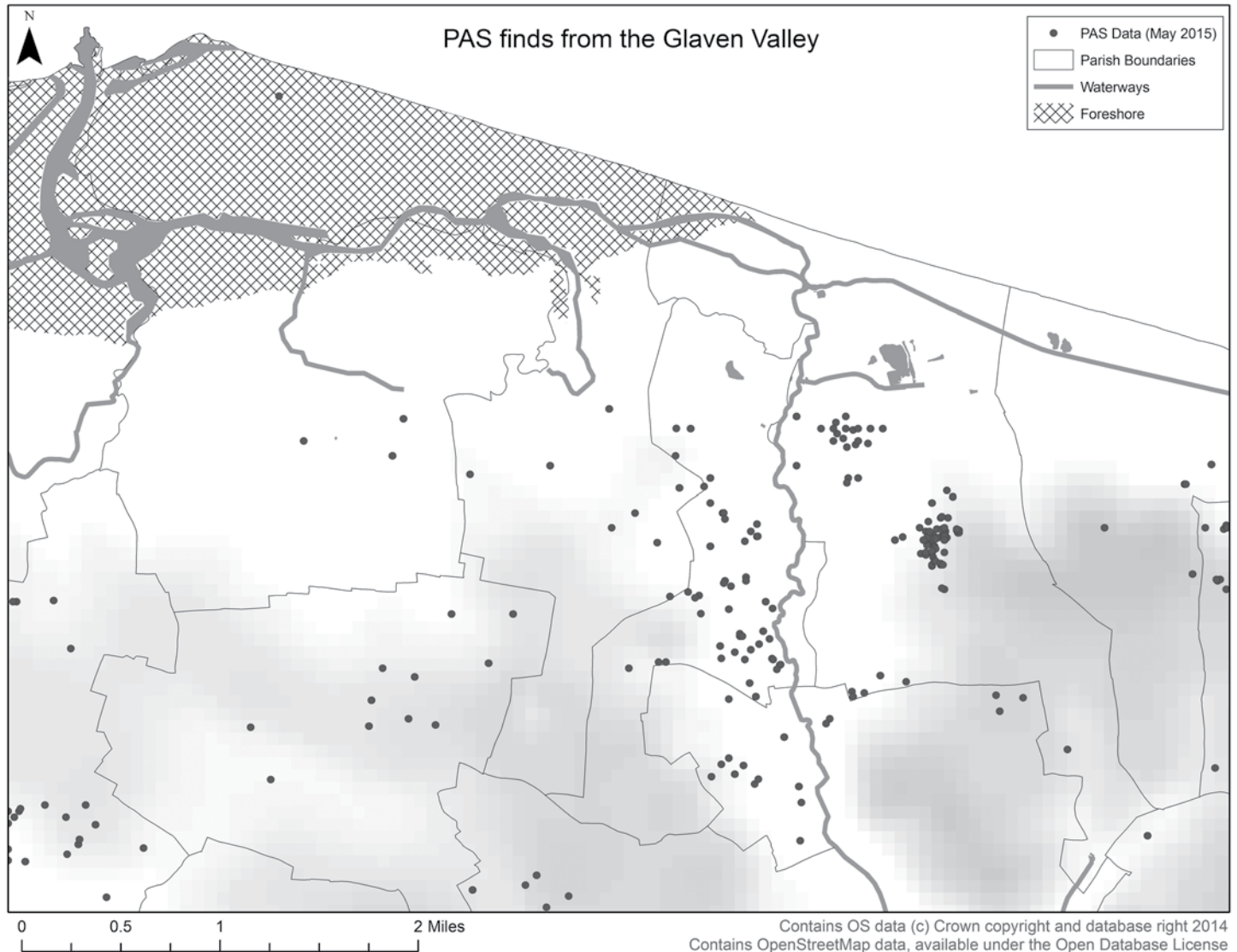
## BAHS Author Wins Prize.

The lead article in the current issue of *the Glaven Historian* has been awarded a prize by the British Association for Local History. The article, on the subject of brewing and delivering beer from the Letheringsett brewery, was written by Margaret Bird, an honorary research fellow at Royal Holloway, University of London, who has spent many years editing the diaries of Mary Hardy of Letheringsett Hall. Margaret was due to travel on the to Birmingham on the 6 June to collect her award. Ah, the glamorous life of an historian! Apparently she was regally entertained by the BALH who were suitably impressed by her work.

Non members wishing to purchase a copy of *the Glaven Historian 14* can do so from Crabpot books in Cley, price £12.00. It contains in addition articles on the Social Geography of Cley, Captain Frederick Marryat's farming in Langham, an account of a voyage on a collier brig, the story of the Rev James Hackman, rector of Wiveton and convicted murderer, and the second part of a detailed history of the Cley Hall Estate.

# Metal detected finds from the Glaven Valley

by Roger Bland



Roger Bland recently retired from the British Museum as Keeper of the Department of Britain, Europe and Prehistory and Head of the Portable Antiquities Scheme and now lives in Cley. Here he writes about the finds recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme database from our area.

In 1997 the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), a project to record archaeological finds made by members of the public started with six pilot schemes and one of these was in Norfolk. In 2003 PAS became a national project and there is now a na-

## **Fig.1. Finds recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme from the Glaven valley**

tional network of 38 Finds Liaison Officers covering the whole of England and Wales, funded by the Government through the British Museum. The finds are recorded onto an online database, <http://finds.org.uk>, which now has details of 1,100,000 objects from across England and Wales. More objects are recorded from Norfolk and Suffolk than any other counties, with some 80,000 from our county. No fewer than five experts,

based at Gressenhall and Norwich, record the finds from the county; half of them are funded by the British Museum, with the other half funded by Norfolk County Council, where they are part of the Norfolk County Council's Historic Environment Service.

When the PAS was first established eighteen years ago, Norfolk acted as a model for the national programme: the late Tony Gregory and Barbara Green had pioneered liaison with metal detector users in the 1970s, at a time when most archaeologists wanted to have nothing to do with them. This has been so successful that by



**Fig 2 (above). Neolithic handaxe from Glandford**



**Fig 3 (left). Token farthing of John Wilch, the George, Cley**

ing token farthings made by John Wilch, the owner of the George in Cley in the 1660s (fig. 3).

Most of the finds from Blakeney and Wiveton have been found by a group of detector users from the US who visit England every summer under the aegis of Discovery Tours. Discovery Tours has been visiting our area for some twenty years now and they have about ten fields on which they detect in the Blakeney, Wiveton and Glandford area. Discovery Tours pay archaeologists to record all their finds, and the number of artefacts that these experienced detectorists recover from these fields which they revisit year after year is remarkable: in August 2014 over seven days of detecting they recorded 677 finds (these are not yet on the PAS database), including no fewer than nine John Wilch farthings and a much rarer one of Richard Shawe of Cley. The majority of the finds date to between the 13th and 17th centuries and consist of coins, tokens, jetons and

the time the PAS was established some 15,000-20,000 finds a year were being recorded onto the Historic Environment Record at Gressenhall, but at that time most of the information was held as paper records. So the Norfolk finds on the national database only represent a sample of the total number of finds from the county that are known. I hope to revisit the records from our area as a retirement project and write more about them in a future Glaven Historian.

Here I just want to provide a

short overview of the finds from the four civil parishes of the Glaven Valley (Blakeney, Cley, Glandford with Letheringsett and Wiveton). The map (fig. 1) shows where these finds come from. There are 749 in all and they range in date from a beautiful Neolithic handaxe from between 3,000 and 2,300 BC from Glandford (fig. 2) (the PAS records finds made by all members of the public, not just metal detector users) to coins and tokens of the 17th and early 18th centuries, includ-



other small metal objects, though there were also a few Roman and Anglo-Saxon finds and two Iron Age coins.

In Cley, most of the finds recorded by PAS are actually found by a small group of detector users who visit the area from the North West and record their finds when they get home with their local Finds Liaison Officer in Liverpool. These, like the Discovery Tours finds, are mostly medieval and post-medieval in date and this group of 201 finds only includes two prehistoric, six Roman objects and ten Anglo-Saxon objects. These finds provide further testimony to the importance of Cley, Blakeney and Wiveton as ports in this period, and it is notable that among the coins found are several from Scotland and Berwick on Tweed, as well as a 14th coin from the German city of Luneberg and a 17th century Danish coin, all of which point to the North Sea trade carried out from these ports. In contrast, the 109 finds from the civil parish of Letheringsett with Glandford are mainly Roman, which accounts for 71 of the objects, as opposed to 32 medieval and post-medieval finds. The finds include a small hoard of 18 late Roman silver coins known as siliquae of the late 4th century AD and found nearby was a ferrule, or a metal tip of a wooden staff, in the form of a figurine of a bird (fig. 4): this would have been a cult object and definitely shows that there was Roman activity in this area.



**Fig 4 (left).** Roman ferrule in the form of a bird from Glandford

**Fig 5 (above).** Hawking vervel of Henry, Prince of Wales

Lastly, perhaps the most intriguing find recorded from our area is this beautiful little silver hawking vervel, which would have been fitted to the leg of a hawk flown by a wealthy sportsman (fig. 5): in this case the owner was a very important man indeed, no less than Henry, Prince of Wales, heir

to king James I before he died of typhoid at the age of 17 in 1612, with the result that his younger brother, Charles, inherited the crown. What Henry was doing flying his hawk near the road from Glandford to Letheringsett is anyone's guess, but it is great fun to speculate!

## **“Your Society is in Crisis” Update**

Dear Members,

I thank those members who responded to our appeal in January 2016 Newsletter no 38. Volunteers have come forward to help on future Society Lecture nights but to date no interest has been expressed in the management committee vacancies. During the past year the committee membership dropped below the Society's minimum requirements of eight and now stands at nine; this situation has prompted a complete review of the Society, resulting in some reduction in future activities to protect the quality of the Society's core aims. I repeat again our appeal – that not all volunteers need be members of the main Management Committee. Let us talk. We are flexible and can discuss what task(s) you could assist with. Please get in touch either with me or a commit-

tee member ASAP by e-mail or phone: contact details can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

Our next meeting will be the AGM on 27th October when changes to the Society's Constitution will require to be made for the Society to continue to function, albeit under constant strain.

Thank you.

*Peter Wordingham*

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# Plane Crash!



## **Extract from *Sea Swallows* by Robert J Pinchen, Warden of Blakeney Point**

“Another little diversion was provided one evening when an aeroplane came down on the Point. It had been commissioned by Professor Oliver to take aerial photographs of the Point.

Difficulties arose and it crashed on the beach, but happily no serious harm resulted to its occupants, except that a camera was sent flying and slightly hurt the pilot’s head. He soon recov-

*The plane being towed away from the crash site. The (presumed) photographer Josh Parker, seen outside his Post Office shop in Blakeney, was probably not responsible for the camera shake*

ered. The real difficulty was to get the plane to take off again. Its nose had penetrated the sand, but a little energetic digging gave a leverage. I had some new ropes on my boat and these were secured to the plane. Swarms of people from the mainland were attracted by

the sight and these were promptly harnessed to the plane. A pull all together and the machine was righted sufficiently to secure one end to our (presumed) useful old hand-cart, and the wheels at the other rested on the ground. In this manner we managed, with four hefty horses, to get the plane over the difficult marshy ground to Cley, where it was dismantled and taken away. We housed the two men that night and next morning they left little the worse for their adventure.”

*Serica East*

# Autumn Programme 2015

## Lectures

**All the following meetings are on Tuesdays in the Harbour Room at the British Legion Hall in the High Street, Blakeney starting at 7.30 pm.** Entrance fees are £3.00 for members and £5.00 for visitors. Please note there will be no meeting in September and the AGM will be in October.

- 27 October**                      **Travel by Stagecoach**  
*Melanie Hilton*  
Melanie will explore the development and importance of stage and mail coach services, including the Norfolk routes to Holt, Cromer and Norwich.  
A short AGM will proceed this meeting
- 24 November**                    **Up the Creek in Wells: the 19th century development of the harbour**  
*Roger Arguile*  
Roger will trace the development and improvement of the harbour and its influence on the increased prosperity of the town. He has recently published a history of Wells.
- 15 December**                    **Christmas Mardle Night:**  
**Rescue Wooden Boats - Little Boats, Great Stories**  
A short lecture on restoring, displaying and sailing some iconic historic wooden boats; then, while enjoying Christmas refreshments, view exhibits on local subjects.
- 26 January**                      **Short Talks from members**  
**Details to be announced in the next Newsletter**
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## History Centre Diary

**July, August, September: every Tuesday morning 10.30am till 1.00pm**  
**October, November: first and last Tuesdays only, times as above**  
**December to February: closed**

Researchers and visitors wishing to use maps, film or fiche readers are strongly advised to book in advance and reserve space as both equipment and table space are limited. Special openings at other times are strictly by prior arrangement. Arrangements can be made by phone 01263 740388, by writing to the

History Centre,  
Blakeney Village Hall,  
Langham Road,  
Blakeney,  
Norfolk  
NR25 7PG

(Remember to include a SAE for confirmation).

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