

BAHS Newsletter

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Summer Flower Festival



Remembering them All; the BAHS tribute of poppies remembering the casualties and survivors of WW1 alike flanked by displays from, amongst others, volunteers of the Duck Pond on the bier and Blakeney XII to the right.
Photo John Peake

Way back in July of last year, and far too late to feature in our Summer Newsletter, St Nicholas Church, Blakeney, held a flower festival. Village organisations and businesses were invited to participate thereby showcasing the vibrancy and diversity available within the wider community.

The BAHS display was centred on the History Centre WW1 exhibition boards located in the north aisle. It featured knitted and crocheted poppies, some 100 flowers in all, made by

members and friends. The crocheted flowers were attached to a coiling stem and used to introduce the display boards, rather like an illuminated manuscript illustration. The knitted flowers, on the other hand, were fashioned into larger flowers and attached to coils of barbed wire that sat above the exhibition boards.

The barbed wire was echoed by the evocative art of the war artist Paul Nash featured on a display board beneath. These pictures portrayed the harrowing and utterly wasted

landscape of the French battlefields of Ypres that preceded the push for Passchendaele; a landscape of mud peppered with bomb craters and skeletal tree stumps, all seemingly wrapped in endless miles of menacing barbed wire.

The Flower Festival continued for several days and we were delighted when the Rector, Libby Dady, asked if it could be left in place until the end of the year as it was such a moving message.

Pam Peake

Caroline to the rescue

by Pam Peake



The Caroline pulling away from the Carnser. Photo Olive Edis, Cromer Museum.

The *Caroline* was the fifth and last of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) lifeboats placed within the harbour and was on station from 1908 till 1935. She was also the largest of all the lifeboats measuring 38 ft in length by 10 ft 9 ins in breadth and rowing 14 oars. In addition she was fitted with two drop-keels, two water-ballast tanks and carried two masts with two standing lugsails. Built by Thames Iron Works, the *Caroline* was the legacy of Miss Caroline Everard of Laverstock, Wiltshire, after whom she was named.

Her 27 years of service included the Great War years when she was launched on numerous occasions, however, only two of the Blakeney launches were recognised and recorded as “War Service” to the Allied cause by the RNLI. Both launches occurred in January 1918 over a period of just two days when, in appalling conditions, the *Caroline* took the crew off the steamer SS *General Havelock* of Newcastle followed by the crew of HM Tug *Joffre* the next day, saving 30 lives.

Monday, 7th January

Both rescues were effected in the small hours of the morning, the first being the result of flares seen in Wells about 3.00 am on Monday morning 7th January.

The Wells and Blakeney lifeboats were launched to assist SS *General Havelock* that had been driven on shore on sands between Wells and Blakeney at Warham Hole. The Wells lifeboat arrived first but quickly returned home when assured that no assistance was needed. The *Caroline*, however, remained with the stricken vessel and as conditions deteriorated the crew of 16 finally abandoned the steamer and transferred to the lifeboat which then headed back home into Blakeney Harbour. It was snowing and the overall weather conditions were logged by the RNLI as “NWN – NNW, Mod. Gale, Rough Sea, snow”. It was further noted that both oars and sails were used.

The *Caroline* eventually returned to the Quay where the stranded mariners were taken to the White Horse to recover under the care of Susie Long, wife of the Bowman, H. Charles Long. Meanwhile Mr Temple Lynes, the local honorary representative of the Shipwrecked Mariners Society, took charge of them and made arrangements for their safe return home.

Tuesday, 8th January

During the rest of the day and into the night, the storm worsened and this time the RNLI recorded the weather as

“N, Strong Gale, Very Heavy Sea, Snow”. Then in the early hours of Tuesday morning yet more distress signals were seen and once again the *Caroline* was launched, this time at 4.30 am. Whether she had been returned to her official mooring in the ‘Pit’, the lower part of the Harbour, or left at the Quay, is not known. On this occasion, however, with the crew barely recovered from the previous rescue, they were able to sail directly to the stricken vessel, a tug. Rather ironically HMS *Joffre*, a powerful tug, had been sent from Immingham, Lincolnshire to tow the steamer off the beach but, on arrival, a terrific blizzard set in and forced her ashore, about half a mile eastward of the SS *General Havelock*.

The crew of 14 were safely transferred from the tug to the *Caroline* and the coxswain George Long once again turned and made for home. Meanwhile the gale had become a blizzard and, being so cold, the salt spray quickly froze wherever it landed, be it land, sea or lifeboat. Even the channel leading to the quay was frozen over and ice had to be broken before the lifeboat could proceed. The boat was a solid mass of ice and the crews had to be extricated before being lifted out of the lifeboat, frozen in position, and carried onto the Carnser. Remember these were not young men.



The lifeboat volunteers fully kitted out with oil skins and their relatively new kapok lifesaving jackets that had been introduced in 1904. George Long stands 5th from the left with William Starling to his right while Charles Long is third down from the top of the stairs. Photo Olive Edis, Cromer Museum.

On this occasion, with no spare room at the White Horse, the crew of the tug were taken next door to the Ship Inn, where they recovered under the care of the landlord, Ezra Bond.

When the weather finally abated, powerful motor salvage pumps were put aboard the SS *General Havelock* and these undoubtedly saved the vessel as she was towed off by two government boats and safely docked. However it was some time later before the tug was finally refloated.

The Lifeboat Volunteers

The names and ages of the crew for the January rescues are recorded on a memorial board in the south aisle of St. Nicholas Church. This is the only list of a lifeboat crew ever recorded for any of the five Blakeney lifeboats it also reveals that the volunteers had an average age of nearly 55 with many being well past retirement age. You should visit the church to read the board and view the painting of the coxswain, George Long by John Page, that sits just above it. Then remember to visit the north aisle where the RNLI Lifeboat Service boards are mounted on the wall behind the presentation model of the *Hettie* lifeboat.

George served on three lifeboats in all; *Hettie*, *Zaccheus Burroughes* and *Caroline*. He retired at the end of 1920, after 40 years, and was presented with

a Certificate of Long Service by the RNLI, January 28th, 1921. Amongst that memorable crew in January 1918, George had his two brothers William and James, two sons Charles and William and his brother-in-law, William Starling. Francis Kerrison was another brother-in-law but he was the signalman. Missing, because they were away serving in the war were three more sons, Matthew, Fred and Sammy Long, who had been on the lifeboat before 1914. Also away serving, but not related to George, were the cousins William and William E. Baines, as well as Ernest Bishop and Edward Bambridge.

The endurance and courage of the volunteers shown by these two rescues is palpable. Like the servicemen, they were willing to risk all, and for this they were each paid 22/6d for the first rescue and £2.5.0 for the second. Frank Kerrison, the signal man, was paid 8/- and 15/9d respectively. Then later in February, the RNLI committee ordered that each man on the boat should be awarded an additional 10 shillings for the second rescue. Records show that this second rescue took 5 hours from launching the boat to returning to the Quay. So for this service alone they each received a total of £2.15.0 or, put another way, 11/- per hour.

Olive Edis

The Sheringham based photographer

Olive Edis took a series of photographs of both the crew and the *Caroline* in early 1918, this was after the rescues and shortly before being appointed an official war photographer; the first British woman to receive such an honour. Although not as striking as her studio photographs of "Kings and Fishermen", she still managed to leave us with enduring photographs of these volunteers. One photograph in particular was mounted with the names and ages of the crew displayed down each side and embossed with her monogram. Copies of this presentation photograph have passed down through several of the lifeboat families.

Not so well known are her two photographs featured in this article. The first is similar to the presentation photograph but on this occasion the lifeboat sits further out in the creek with the oars clearly displayed. The second is interesting because it shows the volunteers posed against the granary at the bottom of the High Street. Long since gone is the entrance to the worm shed on the left and the flight of stairs but not so the mardle bench or lazy seat that can just be glimpsed to the right. This is still with us, albeit newly fashioned from sturdier wood.

These rescues are a reminder of the selfless courage of the lifeboat volunteers serving on the Home Front.



Chalk Roads in North Norfolk

A fascinating photograph taken on the 26th September 1908 (Photograph 1) is the starting point for this story; a story that relies on serendipity and a rich archive of picture postcards. The photograph was taken by Professor Frank Oliver from the top of the tower of St Nicholas Church in Blakeney looking east across Wiveton towards Cley and beyond to the base of the shingle spit that leads to Blakeney Point. Oliver had come to Blakeney to recuperate from a serious illness, in the course of his stay he visited the Point and became enchanted with the area and the possibilities for research. He brought with him a specialised camera that enable him to take wide landscape views as seen in this photograph.

The photograph emphasises the enormous changes in the landscape that have taken place over the last century. Trees were concentrated around

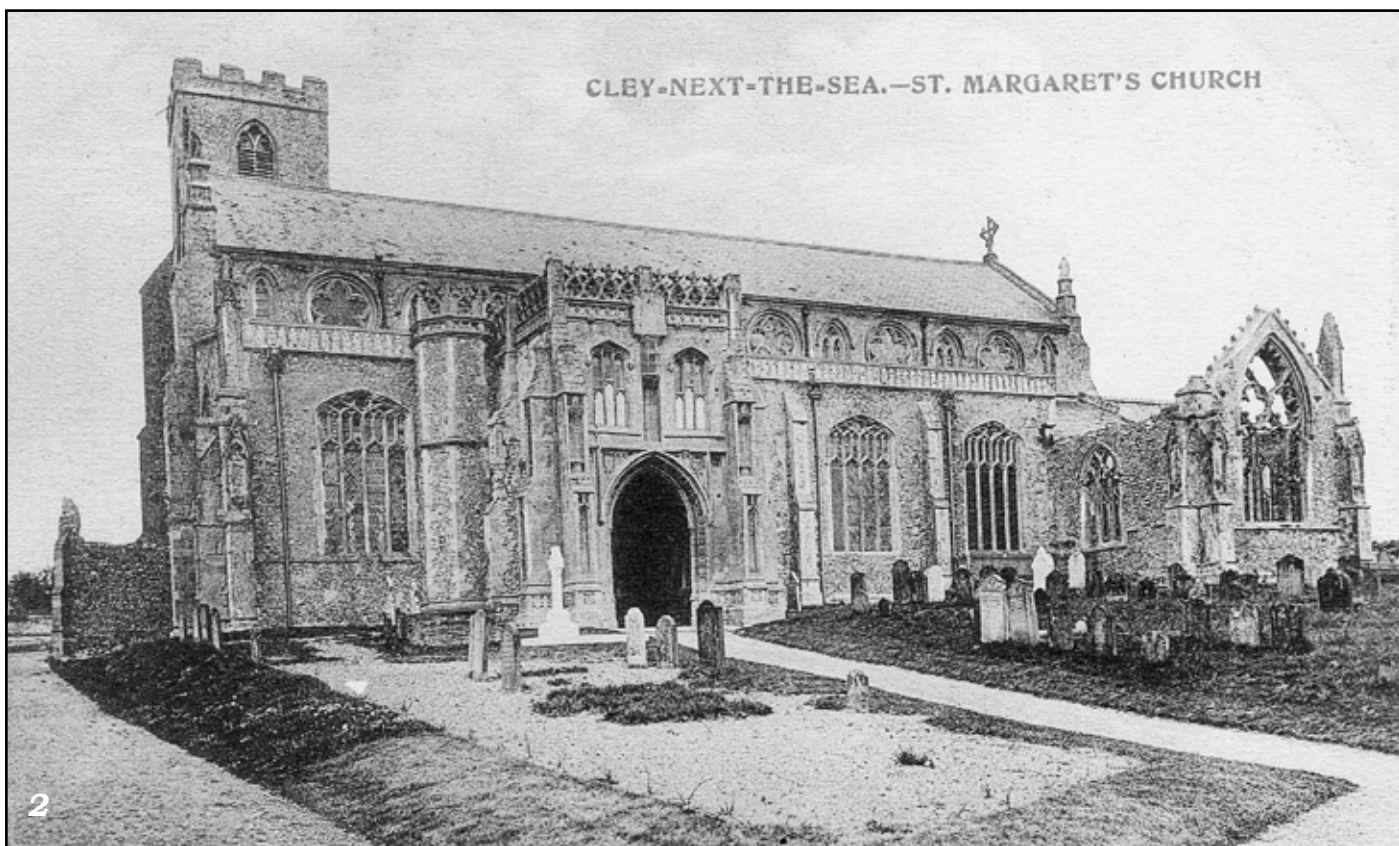
favoured houses like Wiveton Hall and Cley New Hall, but were largely absent from hedgerows or elsewhere. There were even haystacks! While in the foreground is a chalk pit and the top of the second smaller tower of the church that houses a light that acted as a 'lighthouse' prior to the trees obscuring the view.

However, it also includes a curiosity that is the subject of this note – it is the row of regular white marks strung along the verge of the road leading to Cley. What are they? A reasonable guess is they were heaps of chalk that could be used to repair the surface of the road. So was the road also constructed of chalk? It probably was as it certainly looks very white.

Initially chalk seems to be an unusual substance for constructing roads and no references to this practice being used in this area have been found. There are numerous archaeo-

logical records of chalk being used in the foundations of walls of buildings and even as a floor surface, besides being the raw material used in lime kilns. The quest for more information was abandoned until the discovery of chalk layers in the trenches dug in Cley Churchyard; the results were published in two papers in 2017 in the *Glaven Historian*. These provoked discussion about the time period when these layers were deposited, as there was an absence of any written supporting evidence. Although chalk has been recorded in Cley overlaying and sealing medieval deposits, the two layers could easily have been separated by centuries of activity. But this reawakened my interests.

An immediate and fruitful source of new information was early postcards from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Richard Jefferson generously allowed me to examine his extensive





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collection of Cley Church. Many of the early cards showed that at the turn of the century the paths to the South and West Porches were white indicating both were dressed with chalk, as was the road leading to the South Gate. However, they also showed the chalk surfaces were not maintained consistently as in some cases grass is visibly encroaching onto the white surfaces. An even more surprising feature was revealed in one card (Photograph 2): a white area covered a large part of the graveyard lying between the two paths, but this must have survived for only a short period as it had disappeared in later images. Chalk was therefore used not only on the paths and roads but also to augment the area around one group of graves; a practice that is replicated today with marble chips used within a retaining surround. Furthermore, by enhancing and enlarging the images it can be seen the chalk maintained a granular structure with 'flakes' being used both on the surface of paths and the graveyard.

Another postcard (Postcard 3) acquired from that ubiquitous source eBay provided a further piece of evidence. It is of the green at Salthouse with four heaps of chalk deposited on the central area opposite the Dun Cow and alongside a white road. Careful examination again show the chalk consisted of chips or flakes, but in this case in different stages of weathering.

This prompted a further search of the literature, it unearthed a reference from 2009 in a parish magazine for Swaffham Prior in Cambridgeshire.

Here was an account of chalk from local pits being used in the past for making and reinforcing roads in the nearby fen areas. Closer to home a report was found in our History Centre – a report on 'Surveyors' Allotments in North Norfolk: A Directory' published by the NNDC in 1998 that provided some interesting information on roads, but not on the use of chalk. Summarising, the relevant information from the time of the Inclosures in the late 18th and early 19th centuries indicated the *'maintenance of roads was a haphazard affair generally deemed to be the responsibility of the adjacent landowner. In order to ensure that this work was done with some semblance of uniformity Surveyors of the Highways were appointed for each parish and to them were 'allotted' parcels of suitable land.'* Not all parishes had Surveyors Allotments, this suggests that either not all pits were recorded or rather that pits remaining under the control of private landowners were ignored as they lay outside the control of local governance. Later with the creation of Rural District Councils in 1894 jurisdiction for maintenance of the highways passed to them and then later to County Councils

Many of the local pits listed in this survey were for sand, gravel and clay, a few, like one in Weybourne, are listed as having chalk exposed. In Blakeney chalk is close to the surface and an extensive exposure is visible in a pit close to the Church in Photograph 1. Furthermore this pit was on land owned by the Calthorpes, who were Lords of the Manor, and at one stage were presumably responsible for the

roads bordering their property, consequently it is not included in the survey. So locally the availability of chalk was not a problem, but the evidence from the excavations at Cley Churchyard suggests it was not used continuously, rather episodically.

What was the advantage of using chalk for paths or roads? Certainly, the same reason as floors, it would have produced a free draining surface that was not so liable to produce muddy potholes or ruts. While on paths it would have also given a cleaner surface to walk on and this could have been welcomed by ladies wearing long skirts or dresses.

This is the end of this short story which has had a tortuous history that started with a view from Blakeney Church and included an archaeological dig in Cley Churchyard. It still leaves many loose ends and undoubtedly more information will appear, the question is where and how? Perhaps it will be a hole in a road – I am reminded of a song:

*There I was, a-digging this hole
A hole in the ground, so big and sort of
round it was
There was I, digging it deep
It was flat at the bottom and the sides
were steep
When along, comes this bloke in a
bowler which he lifted and scratched
his head
Well we looked down the hole, poor de-
mented soul and he said*

(with acknowledgements to Bernard Cribbins)

John Peake

From the Committee (what's left of it)

Quo Vadimus?

...or where are we going? The short answer would seem to be 'nowhere' unless we can strengthen our much depleted committee. But let's start with a look at where we've been as is appropriate for history buffs. The Society has its origins in the late '80s in a class run by the Cambridge University Extra Mural department led by the late, and much lamented, Chris Barringer who taught us where to find useful records and, more importantly, how to read them. Then twenty years ago the Blakeney History Group morphed into the Blakeney Area Historical Society with membership thrown open to anyone interested in local history. We put on lectures and ran courses with outside speakers and tutors, and produced thrice-yearly newsletters and an annual journal *The Glaven Historian*, initially under the editorship of John Wright. Membership boomed. Then in 2003 we opened the History Centre, the jewel in our crown, to house and give members and the general public access to our growing collection of records.

Now we are frankly struggling with a much depleted committee. We need fresh blood. In we particularly need to end the duplication of roles – those marked in red below.

For the immediate future the lecture series will continue as before, the History Centre likewise; *The Glaven Historian* will, under our dynamic new Editor Roger Bland, revert to annual publication though it will be a bit thinner; the website will receive a stylistic makeover.

But the Newsletter will disappear in its current form. I've been editing and producing it for the last 17 years

which, frankly, is long enough, plus the fact that being published every six months its content is hardly 'news'. I'm thinking perhaps an expanded version of the monthly emails – for which you will have to opt-in to meet data protection rules. Any thoughts? Perhaps someone else wants to take it on?

Richard Kelham

Membership

At the AGM in October the following proposals were agreed:

- To move the start of our membership year from 1st July to 1 September from 2019 which means the 2018-19 membership year will be fourteen months long.
- An increase in subscriptions rates from 2018-19 for Individual membership from £10 to £12 and Family membership from £14 to £18. Corporate rates will not change. This is the first rise in subscription rates since 2003-4 and is necessitated by the increasing costs of running the membership programme. The increase is equivalent to 1.5%/year.

- To add the option to pay by Standing Order or online banking (Bill payment or BACS) from 2018-19. It is thought that members may find this more convenient particularly as we intend the new subscription rate to be in place for several years.

Website

Over the last few years we have added a Committee area to the website that provides a bespoke membership system

where members' details and subscriptions are recorded. This made it possible last year to add a Members' area where members may login to check their subscription status, update personal details and access material made available just to members. However the publicly visible side of the website has not moved forward very much especially given the increase in smart phones and tablets that may be used to access it with their smaller screens.

In the coming weeks the plan is to introduce a revamped website that, for want of a better term, focuses on a better user experience that should make finding information easier and also display information more appropriately for the device being used. A large screen or the small screen of a smart phone won't matter so much, nor will the screen's orientation of landscape or portrait.

As importantly it will allow multiple contributors to add content which may allow the website to become an increasingly useful resource for the society.

Richard Daley

Spring Outing

Jonathan Hooton has agreed to follow up his lecture last autumn on the French Quarter in Norwich with a guided tour of the area. At the time of going to press the date has not been finalised though it will probably be Monday 30 April. If you would like to join us on this walk please contact Diana Cooke on 740320.

Further information should be available at the Members Meeting on Tuesday 30 January. You were planning to attend, weren't you?

BAHS Management Committee

Chairman*: Richard Kelham [Temporary], chair@bahs.uk 01263 740186

Secretary*: Diana Cooke, secretary-bahs@bahs.uk, 01263 740320

History Centre*: Diana Cooke [Temporary], historycentre@bahs.uk, 01263 740320

Membership Secretary*: Richard Daley [Temporary], membership@bahs.uk, 01263 740180

Publications*: Roger Bland, publications@bahs.uk, 01263 740806

Treasurer*: Richard Daley, treasurer@bahs.uk, 01263 740180

Lecture Programme Manager*: Roger Bland [Temporary], lecture.programme@bahs.uk, 01263 740806,

BAHS Sales Organiser*: Jan Semple, sales@bahs.uk, 01263 860741

Website Organiser*: Richard Daley, webmaster@bahs.uk, 01263 740180

* indicates BAHS officer

History Centre

Contact Diana Cooke on 01263 740320, email or write to: History Centre, Blakeney Village Hall, Langham Road, Blakeney, Norfolk, NR25 7PG

Winter/Spring Programme 2018

Events

All the following meetings are on Tuesdays in the Harbour Room at The British Legion Hall in the High Street, Blakeney, starting at 7.30pm. Entrance: £3 for members and £5 for visitors, including refreshments

30 January

Members' Night

Talk 1: Cley Then & Now by *Richard Jefferson*

Talk 2: The story of a summer shawl made in Norwich by *Diana Cooke*

These talks are open to all but are given by members

27 February

The story of Norfolk Wools

Roger Arguile

'... the passage of wool from sheep to the looms of the English weaver is one of the almost totally obscure areas of the mediaeval wool trade' according to historians. It brought wealth to England, but Norfolk wool was never of the best quality and its production is in good part a mystery. There are, however, a few clues.

27 March

Saints and their badges: pilgrim badges from Norfolk and elsewhere

Dr Michael Lewis

Pilgrim badges can give a unique insight into the medieval practice of pilgrimage and one great centre was the shrine of St Mary at Walsingham. These badges are now often found by metal detector users in the countryside and recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme.

Dr Michael Lewis is Head of the Portable Antiquities Scheme at the British Museum. He is an expert on the Bayeux Tapestry and among his books is 'Saints and their Badges'.

24 April

Scapegoat! The Avoidable Death of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse

Dr Martin Stephen

Martin Stephen was formerly High Master of St Paul's School and Headmaster of the Perse and Manchester Grammar Schools. He has written many books, including the Henry Gresham series and Diary of a Stroke and is an authority on the poetry of the First World War.

History Centre Diary

Public Openings

| | |
|-------------|------------------|
| 6 March | 10.30am till 1pm |
| 3 April | 10.30am till 1pm |
| 1 May | 10.30am till 1pm |
| 5 June | 10.30am till 1pm |
| 3 July | 10.30am till 1pm |
| 7 August | 10.30am till 1pm |
| 4 September | 10.30am till 1pm |
| 2 October | 10.30am till 1pm |

Private Openings

Appointments for private openings can be made for any time of the year depending on the availability of volunteers. Please phone 01263 740320, write to the History Centre, Blakeney Village Hall, Langham Road, Blakeney, Norfolk NR25 7PG or email historycentre@bahs.uk to make your appointment.

Researchers and visitors wishing to use maps, large documents, film or fiche readers are strongly advised to reserve a place in advance as both equipment and table space are very limited.

Full details of the BAHS Committee can be found on the Society's website www.bahs.uk

The Glaven Historian

Glaven Historian 16 will be published later this year. I would welcome offers of articles from members and others; the deadline is the end of July. Please do contact me if you think you could contribute.

Roger.bland@bahs.uk (or 01263 740806)

"So long, and thanks for all the fish"