

# BLAKENEY AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter No. 7

January 2000

Dear Members,

The Editor's computer is now fully restored and it's time to consign the last century to history and welcome the new. It's also the time for new resolutions and what better time than January 2000 to make them bigger and firmer than usual? We all hope that the Society will benefit as a result.

## RECENT EVENTS

At the second **AGM** held last September the following members were re-elected to the Management Committee:

Joint Chairmen	:	Michael Lee and Peter Wordingham
Secretary & Editor	:	John Wright
Treasurer & Membership Sec	:	Eunice Wordingham
Archivist	:	Mary Ferroussat
Committee members	:	Peter Carnell and Monica White

Since then Richard Kelham and Pamela Peake have joined the Committee.

The meeting accepted the Committee's report for 1998/99 and also agreed that the annual subscription should be increased to £8 with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July, the start of the membership year 2000/01. Members and guests, 36 in all, were treated to a talk on **corn milling** by Mike Thurlow, from Letheringsett Mill. He touched on the early use of quern stones which were followed by millstones powered first by water, then by wind. Corn might be milled three times to produce initially animal feed, then a coarse flour and finally a fine flour for those who could afford the extra cost. In the early 1900s the first roller mills were introduced but not until the Second World War did they finally take over from the old water and wind mills. The modern process involves up to 18 sets of metal rollers and thorough sieving, whereby animals still get the coarse products (the best?) while the finest go to make flour – but only after the addition of a large number of chemicals. Mike was clearly not a fan of the modern industrial process, although a few firms, notably Marriages of Cheltenham, had devised a process which (like that at Letheringsett) needed no chemical additions. He concluded by describing a ghostly presence both seen and felt at the Letheringsett mill which seemed to act almost as a guardian angel, a most unexpected end to an interesting talk.

At a special meeting in October Peter Carnell outlined his ideas for a programme of surveys at **Wiveton**. He reminded the 26 members attending that Wiveton was once a port of some consequence and said that permission had been obtained to work on the field next to the church which would have been a waterfront in the days before embankments stopped the free flow of the tides. He suggested a number of activities which members might pursue, including resistivity and contour surveys, fieldwalking and topsoil sampling, examining walls and hedges, and studying maps and documents. It was agreed that survey work would take place every Friday, weather permitting, using Agar House as a base.

At the November Clubnight 23 members heard Roger Bland, of the British Museum, enthusing about the richest ever treasure found in this country. The **Hoxne hoard**, discovered in 1992 by Eric Lawes, contained over 15,000 gold and silver roman coins, jewellery, and 124 items of silver tableware. It had been buried in a wooden chest and was excavated promptly to prevent possible looting. Roger himself had studied the coins after they had been declared 'treasure trove' and acquired by the British Museum for £1.75m. Roger showed slides of the (19) gold bracelets and (6) necklaces, and some of the 78 silver spoons (doubling the number

found in Britain to date) each inscribed with the owner's name. The coins, 580 of them gold *solidi*, were worth about 20 year's salary for a professional man (eg professor or doctor today), or 3 year's salary for a Provincial Governor. The gold coins were minted in various places, including Milan and Ravenna, as the mint travelled with the emperor's court. About 80% of the silver coins, mostly *siliquae*, were clipped and the latest in date was AD 407. The hoard was therefore buried some time after that date, ie at the end of the Roman occupation. A full catalogue of the coins will appear later this year.

Roger also had one piece of hot local news. The received wisdom is that some coins carrying the name Prasto are Iceni coins minted in the reign of Prasutagus, the husband of Boudicca. However, some recent finds have suggested that the reading should be Esuprastus which is not an Iceni name at all but one associated with the Corieltauvi tribe in the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire area. If so, this would deprive Prasutagus of much of the evidence for his existence. If you came to the talk then you heard it there first! The rest of the world had to wait until 29<sup>th</sup> December when an article appeared in the Times.

In November Peter Carnell and others described the findings of work carried out last year at the 'chapel' on **Blakeney Eye**. The conclusions were all compatible with the view that this was indeed a medieval chapel, though no proof could be found (and might not be until an excavation is carried out). Much of the material was published in the Glaven Historian (Issue No. 2) but more recent information has been obtained on the pieces of slate found at the chapel. The source is now known to be South West England, quite possibly the Delabole quarries, known to have been operating in the medieval period. This slate can be distinguished from the Welsh slate used to roof the Watch House – which presumably came by rail. There is so little medieval slate in East Anglia that a medieval date for that found at the chapel will be difficult to sustain unless some corroborating evidence can be found.

## **THE WIVETON PROJECT**

It's early days yet for the Wiveton Project and too soon to start presenting results, but a number of surveys are under way. Resistivity work has started on the waterfront site, though poor weather on some Fridays and some equipment glitches as well have slowed progress. The extent of the roadside walls has been examined – what was their original function? Hedges, too, have been studied and estimates made of their age: some seem to date from the early 1800s and others are much earlier. Fieldwalking has begun on selected fields and the old churchyard wall is being surveyed in some detail. There are no early maps of Wiveton but there are many documentary references to the Wiveton bridges – what does their history tell us about the 'port' of Wiveton? So many questions could be asked about the history of the village that there is a real danger of pursuing too many and resolving too few. Nevertheless, the dozen or so members who are engaged on the work at present should be able to put on a good display at the exhibition planned for 15<sup>th</sup> July, the date of the Summer Lecture to be given by Peter Carnell. Meanwhile, if any more members would like to help with the Wiveton studies they would be very welcome – please see Peter.

## **MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ACTION**

### **The UEA Course**

Following the cancellation last autumn of the proposed course by Dr Robin Lucas, the UEA quickly found a replacement: The Development of the East Anglian Landscape 1500-1900, tutored by Mike Medlar (an early member of the old Blakeney History Group). The 13 members who attended the 10 lectures were impressed by Mike's detailed knowledge and his ability to convey it to the class. The Management Committee meet next on 9<sup>th</sup> February and will then need to decide whether to ask

the UEA to put on another course this autumn and, if so, what the subject might be. In practice, the opportunities will be limited by the available tutors within travelling distance, but if anyone has particular ideas please let a Committee member know.

### ***The Glaven Historian***

Articles are now being sought (urgently) for the third issue which will need to be drafted before Easter to be sure of publication in June. Ideas to the Editor, please. There are still plenty of copies of Issue No. 2 for sale at £5, postage included.

### **Reading and Archive Room**

After much work trying to ease the Blakeney Village Hall extension into being the Committee has had to accept that this particular proposal is now unlikely to proceed. Other possible alternatives are being pursued but there is little point in saying anything further until some real progress has been made. Meanwhile the Committee is grateful to Peter Carnell for supplying a base for use as the Wiveton Project Office.

### **Exhibition at Blakeney**

As reported in Newsletter No. 6 the Society will be staging an exhibition in the Blakeney Methodist Chapel this summer (28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> July). Mary Ferroussat has agreed to organise it and the current thoughts are that there should be three themes: landscape, buildings and things marine. Any offers of help to Mary, please.

### **Possible publications**

Your Committee intends to produce one or more publications soon, based on the work of the Society to date, but no decisions have yet been taken. Again, members who have particular suggestions of what material ought to be included should get in touch with the Editor – preferably before 9<sup>th</sup> February.

### **FUTURE PROGRAMME**

The next Clubnight is on 25<sup>th</sup> January when Paul Banham will talk about Heraldry, which is not merely an intriguing, if somewhat antiquarian, subject but has a real value in providing evidence about who did what in the past. This Newsletter will be too late to give a reminder of the meeting but the Committee hope that as many of you as possible will be there to enjoy the talk.

#### **Clubnights**

All clubnights have been well attended but there is always room in the Chapel for a few more. Do come along: meetings are free to members **and** their guests.

25<sup>th</sup> January 2000  
Tuesday 7.30 pm

#### **Heraldry**

**Paul Banham** will give a talk on heraldry and explain how you can describe and decipher a coat of arms. Whose arms are on the 1586 map of Blakeney?

- 29<sup>th</sup> February 2000      **Wells** (the place)      **Brian Scott** of the Wells Local History Group will talk briefly about the Group's activities and will then give a slide-assisted talk about what can be seen on walks round the town.  
 Tuesday 7.30 pm
- 15<sup>th</sup> July 2000      **Blakeney Haven**      **Peter Carnell** will give a public talk in **Blakeney Village Hall** about the Society's recent geophysical survey work undertaken as part of their investigation of the medieval ports of Blakeney.  
 Saturday 7.30 pm  
 Blakeney V. Hall
- 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> July      **Exhibition**      A 3 day exhibition of Blakeney history to be held in the Methodist Chapel.

As well as our own programme of events there are other meetings which members might like to attend. In particular, the **Wells** Local History Group has the following meetings:

2 <sup>nd</sup> February	The Archaeology of Wells	Andrew Rogerson
1 <sup>st</sup> March	The Architecture of Wells	Michael Brackenbury
5 <sup>th</sup> April	Seahenge – the story so far	Jayne Bown
3 <sup>rd</sup> May	Victorian Cooking	Lyn Gash

The meetings are held in the Maltings Community Centre, Staithe Street, and begin at 7.30 pm. Further information from the Secretary, Maureen Whiddett, (01328 710136).

Just to hand is a letter from the **Walsingham** Millennium Committee with advance notice of a special exhibition to be held for a week in October, together with a programme of talks and a series of booklets. More details in the next Newsletter.

The **Aylsham** Local History Society also puts on lectures:

24 <sup>th</sup> February	Curiosities of Norfolk	Janet Smith
23 <sup>rd</sup> March	Cromer and district (old photos?)	Peter Stibbons
17 <sup>th</sup> April	Norwich Textiles 1750-1850	Lyn Gash

These meetings are held in the Friendship Club and also start at 7.30 pm.

**AND FINALLY**      Your Editor is becoming acquainted (slowly) with the marvels of computer technology and can now bring you a test diagram culled from another publication!



As usual, any comments, requests, suggestions, corrections etc should be made known to any member of the Management Committee or to the Secretary and Editor: John Wright (01263 740589).