

Blakeney Area Historical Society



BAHS Digital Newsletter Issue 1 8th August 2020 www.bahs.uk

Welcome

Welcome to the first digital newsletter of the Blakeney Area Historical Society. With the Coronavirus 19 pandemic still affecting the activities of the society the committee has decided to bring back the newsletter but in a digital format. The small number of current members not on email will be sent a printed version.

This newsletter is being sent to all current and past members plus individuals who have signed up to our information emails. If you would rather not receive the newsletter you may unsubscribe using the link at the end of the newsletter.

Publication of this newsletter will not be regular and will, in part, depend on suitable material to publish and, no doubt, by how well it is received. Please email info@bahs.uk to let us know your views or have any suggestions on how it may be improved. Also, please get in touch if you wish to provide an entry in a future newsletter. We expect future issues to be smaller than this first issue.

In this newsletter there is information about the meetings questionnaire sent out in June, our meeting schedule for the rest of 2020, the AGM and other society business. Possibly of more interest is information on the forthcoming Glaven Historian 17 and a look back at the society's activities since its formation 30 years ago. Two of our members, Margaret Bird and Serica East have kindly provided articles on the recently released four new volumes *Mary Hardy and her World 1773-1809* and a short history of Serica's *Great Great Grandparents the Parker's* respectively.

For those interested in the technology you will find information on how we produce the newsletter is provided towards the end of the newsletter.

Finally, before you settle down to read the newsletter please note that any information contained in the newsletter is copyright the author and is published as provided and with their permission.

2020 Autumn Lectures



BAHS Meeting at Cley Village Hall January 2019

The option of holding a socially distanced meeting is not currently possible as meeting rooms and village halls remain closed. As a result the society reluctantly decided to arrange digital Zoom meetings as the only viable alternative during the rest of 2020. Thanks go to the speakers who have agreed to provide their lectures over Zoom.

29 September, 7.30 pm on Zoom,

Jonathan Hooton, *Imagined Coasts – the Medieval Port of Burnham.*

27 October, 7.30 pm on Zoom

Roger Bland, *Roman coins from rivers and wells in Britain: hoards or gifts for the gods?*

24 November, 7.30 pm on Zoom

Susanna Wade-Martins, *Dereham and its vicar in Victorian Times.*

Further Details

Please visit www.bahs.uk for further information on each talk.

Arrangements

Information on using Zoom will be provided by email with general details on the BAHS website closer to the date of each talk

BAHS 30th Anniversary: 1990-2020

At the beginning of August 2020, a three day exhibition was due to be held in Blakeney Village Hall to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Blakeney Area Historical Society (BAHS) and its forerunner, the Blakeney History Group (BHG). Disappointingly, as a result of coronavirus, it has not been possible to run such an event. Instead, below is a brief resume of some of the achievements of the BAHS (1997-2020). Details of the innovative work of the BHG (1990-1997) is summarised in an article *Celebrating the Early Years* published in [Newsletter No 30, January 2011](#).

Looking through the Minute books there are certain subjects that crop up on a regular basis - Exhibitions, Publications, Lectures, History Centre, Website and Social Events. None of these would happen without a supportive membership. The number of members has varied considerably over the years but peaked in 2006-7 & 2011-12 and now hovers around 100; we are, of course, always glad to welcome new members.

Exhibitions have played an important role in advertising the work of the BAHS and the History Centre, expanding the knowledge of both locals and visitors. There have been six major Exhibitions held, variously, in Blakeney Parish Church, Blakeney Methodist Chapel and Blakeney Village Hall.

Publications have provided a vehicle in which to share research about the history of the local villages, their buildings and their characters. The first Newsletter was published in February 1998 and continued until January 2018, that is 43 issues later; and today, you are reading the first fully-formed digital Newsletter! Also in 1998, the first Glaven Historian journal was launched in June. As of this month, there will have been 17 editions published.

Lectures have been held on a regular basis, initially there was a Summer Lecture followed by one in the Autumn, alongside an AGM. Monthly meetings (excluding summer months) have been held at least since 2000, providing an opportunity to learn and to socialise. This Autumn, however, the usual routine is being turned on its head as we resort to digital technology using Zoom in order to cater for coronavirus restrictions.

The History Centre – ‘the jewel in our crown’ - was formally opened at its present site in March, 2003. After several years of negotiation and planning, the Centre provided a place to hold archives, store equipment and meet ‘enquirers’. Initially, the Society had use of a disused parish council portakabin which was converted into a ‘reading room’. It is usually open to the general public once a month from March to October but is another victim of the current pandemic and has been closed this year.

A simple **website** for the Society was created back in 2007 which was replaced in 2011 when the Treasurer took over its management. Since then, it has gone from strength to strength, incorporating a membership system, offering a search facility and a large amount of digitised material.

Social Events – these are the glue for any group and we miss not being able to meet up at the moment. Over the past 30 years many outings and walks with a historic link have been arranged, often with a pub lunch included. More recently, a social Christmas Lunch has replaced the December Lecture.

The next 30 years, for any of us, are difficult to envisage as we face huge economic and social adjustments in the post-coronavirus era. But it is important that the Society continues to preserve records of past events in order to inform the future and encourage the next generation.

Glaven Historian 17

The seventeenth issue of the Glaven Historian, published on the thirtieth anniversary of the Blakeney Area Historical Society, has six papers on topics ranging from the medieval period to the twentieth century.



Glaven Historian 17 Cover

Copies have just been received from the printers and will be distributed, as a benefit of membership, to current members by end August. Details on buying copies will be put on the website shortly.

The principal paper by John Wright gathers together everything that is known about the Carmelite Friary in Blakeney, from its foundation in the early fourteenth century until its dissolution under Henry VIII in 1538. John has drawn on historical records, documents such as wills, besides old maps and a thorough examination of what can be seen on the ground today to present the definitive account of this, one of five Carmelite Friaries in the county.

Eric Hotblack publishes an investigation into an unusual polished flint that he found while fieldwalking at Field Dalling: he concludes that it was a plough pebble. In a short note Frank Hawes highlights a number of anomalies in the 1586 map of Blakeney Harbour by John Darby. The Rev. Dr Tim Fawcett presents a transcription of a notebook kept by the Rev. Harold Fitch, Rector of Stiffkey from 1932 to 1942, which contains details of the 'terriers' held by the church (records of the church's property), an account of the restoration work carried out by Fitch in 1935 and of the tombstones inside the church.

In a second paper John Wright presents an account of the lifeboats stationed at Blakeney from the early nineteenth century until the closure of the lifeboat station in 1935, and to conclude Richard Jefferson sums up the results of the Cley World War I project, undertaken for the centenary of the War, in which he sums up all that is known of the servicemen from Cley killed in the First World War. Richard has been able to add the names of ten extra servicemen to the 29 on the war memorial inside St Margaret's church.

Next Issue

The next issue of Glaven Historian is planned for 2022. Contributions are very welcome: please contact the joint editor, Roger Bland (publications@bahs.uk).

April 2020: Launch of Mary Hardy and her World



*April 2013: John and Pam Peake of the BAHS with Dr John Alban, the County Archivist, at the launch of *The Diary of Mary Hardy* in the refectory of Norwich Cathedral. David Durst, another member, has his back to the camera (right).
[photo Christopher Bird 2013]*

Had Covid-19 not intervened, my four new volumes *Mary Hardy and her World 1773-1809* would have been celebrated in a launch party in the hostry of Norwich Cathedral on 17 April 2020. The launch of the Diary volumes had taken place there in 2013 (pictured).

Members of the society were to have been among the hundred-strong guests. My speech would have included a tribute to the massive contribution made by the BAHS and other local history and specialist societies during my thirty years of research. Both the Newsletter and *The Glaven Historian* are cited frequently in the new work, as also in *The Diary of Mary Hardy*.

I am very glad to have the chance to record my sincere thanks here and in this [news item](#).

Thankfully publication went ahead as planned; the volumes had been printed to a first-class standard by Gomer Press in West Wales in January 2020, comfortably clear of lockdown. The local media gave the event generous coverage, on the radio, in the Norfolk Magazine and in a three-page feature by Rowan Mantell in the Eastern Daily Press and the EDP's sister papers:

[See EDP coverage here](#)

Although bookshops had to remain closed for months, online sales have been strong via [Amazon](#) and direct from the publishers [Burnham Press](#). One review in the national weekly *The Methodist Recorder* for 29 May carried the headline "A North Norfolk treasure-trove":

[See reviews here](#)

The Mary Hardy publications, forming nine volumes in total (with 5800 pages and thousands of illustrations), are lodged in the [History Centre](#) at Blakeney where members of the society and the public can consult them. The indexes alone occupy 820 pages.

The indefatigable Letheringsett diarist has shone new light not only on her home area but, by extension, across a wide panorama of English rural life in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

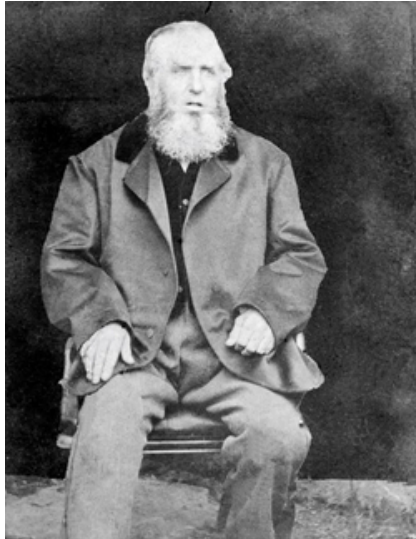
Margaret Bird, BAHS member

James Parker and Susanna Nichols

My Great Great Grandparents

About 200 years ago, my great great grandparents were born. Their lives span the glory days of Blakeney as a thriving port and community and the start of its decline. James Parker was born in 1818 in Guist to Elizabeth Mann a Blakeney girl and John Parker who at the time was a publican but later, at the time of his son's wedding was a farmer.

Looking at the baptismal records of the time, most of the fathers' occupations in Guist were given as labourers. Records at Blakeney show a similar proportion of the fathers as sailors or in trades associated with the port. James was reputed to have run away to Blakeney with a travelling troupe of racing horses but, more likely, he fancied going to sea rather than work on the land. In 1834 he started his seaman apprenticeship on the *Lively*, a 108-ton ship captained by Howard Ramm of Clay. Progress took him through seaman, mate and finally to Master of the *Newcastle Packet* in 1848. Details are all shown on his Master's Certificate of Service. A contemporary Certificate is that of Benjamin Henry Nichols of Blakeney whose elder sister Susanna became James' bride in 1843. Their father, my great great grandfather, Henry Nichols, was a Master Mariner too.



James Parker 1818-1879



Susanna Nichols Parker 1822-1899

The 1851 census shows James and Susannah living in Pigg Street, Blakeney, next door to the Nichols. The 1861 and 1871 Census show James away from Blakeney on the *Newcastle Packet*, firstly in Newcastle and in 1871 at Grimsby. There are frequent notes in the local newspapers of the comings and goings of shipping from the port, including the *Newcastle Packet* under Captain Parker and also the *Hebe* with Captain Nichols.

Many of the local ships around this time had shares in them owned by both James Parker and Benjamin Nichols: *Newcastle Packet*, *Lady Jane Grey*, *Bluejacket* and *Miranda*.

William Jarvis Boyce and the Schollars often joined them in the ownership ventures.

Susanna remained in Blakeney and is noted as Master Mariner's Wife and Shipowner's Wife in the 1861 and 1871 Census. Between his long spells on the *Newcastle Packet*, James was master of the *Miranda* which was wrecked in 1868 on the Gunfleet sands, off Harwich.



Henry Nichols Parker 1858-1920 (Circa 1900)

The birth of three children, Henry Nichols Parker in 1858, Joshua Cook Parker in 1860 and a short lived daughter, Anna Nichols Parker, kept Susanna occupied. She was reputed to sometimes take the Newcastle Packet to London or the North East for shopping.



Joshua Cook Parker 1860-1934

James and Susanna were staunch Methodists and like most of their meeting, strongly affected by a reformist movement in 1849 which split the worshippers. The section of which the Parkers belonged found themselves without a place of worship. A temporary arrangement was to hire a room at the Ship Inn. Eventually it was agreed that the reformists could buy the old chapel and due to a problem with eligibility of the former trustees to own it, it was bought, as his personal property, by James Parker. In due course the United Methodist Free Church was established, and they were then able to own their Chapel. Prior to the split, Susanna and a Mrs Smither had set up a Sunday School. Susanna revived it after the split and was deeply involved until the illness and death of James in 1879. Musical accompaniment to the hymns had been a problem earlier and Mrs Anna Nichols, Susanna's mother, bought a harmonium and demanded her grandsons

Henry Nichols Parker and William Nichols learn the instrument in order to play each Sunday. When Henry left home in 1872, his younger brother Joshua Cook Parker had been trained to take his place. He continued as organist for more than half a century and was a devoted Methodist for the rest of his life. Henry shed his Methodist ties and became involved with Cley Church, playing the organ there.

By the time the sons were teenage, it was becoming clear that the future of Blakeney as a port was declining. Quite simply the port was silting up, the railways were providing cheap and dependable transport for goods. Several of the port's seafaring families moved to the North East to continue in the trade but the Parker brothers chose to stay and follow other trades. Henry became a butcher and married Eliza Spurgeon, daughter of a butcher from Aldborough in 1878. Mostly they lived in Cley but Henry is directory listed in both Cley and Blakeney. Described in the Censuses as butcher and farmer (more likely a grazier), he also built in 1896 what became known as the Town Hall, a public hall to seat 200. Henry and Eliza had 9 children.

The connection to the sea didn't totally fade with Henry Nichols Parker as he was the leader of the Cley Rocket Brigade in the largely unsuccessful rescue of the crew from the stricken SS Hjordis in 1916. He arranged for the rocket apparatus to be taken to the wreck in a cart owned by John Everitt of Cley Hall. James White, father of Ellen, Henry's second wife, found one of the drowned crew days later.

Joshua Cook Parker's career progress in Blakeney was varied. He is immortalised by the photograph showing him outside his shop on the High Street. He was also a photographer and produced many of the local postcards of the time. He was described as a draper and grocer in the 1891 Census, grocer, draper and baker in 1901 with the 1911 Census adding postmaster to the previous activities. He and his wife Martha had 5 children.

Susanna lived another active twenty years after the death of James, dying in 1899. She had a family reputation as a formidable woman and was respected by her Henry Parker grandchildren whose upbringing she was involved in. She moved on James's death to what had been her mother's house on the corner of High Street and Little Lane, now known as Miranda Cottage. She was described as a butcher in the 1881 Census but as Retired (wife of retired sea captain) in 1891. On her death Joshua moved into Miranda Cottage.

Serica East, BAHS member

The Lost Village of Shipden

On the 8th August 1888 the paddle steamer *Victoria* arriving at Cromer from Great Yarmouth ran aground on what was thought to be top of the old church tower of the submerged village of Shipden located approximately 500m north of Cromer pier.

The story of the grounding was recently published on August 1st in the Weather Eye column of the Times and may also be found on the EDP website by [clicking here](#).

Glaven Valley Newsletter

During this pandemic the Glaven Valley Newsletter (GVN) went online and may be found by [clicking here](#).

What may not be well known is that the History Centre is the only known location of a publicly accessible complete set of GVNs from 1987 to now. Possibly an interesting social history project for someone!

Meetings Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire sent out by the BAHS on the 19th June was on how to hold meetings during the coronavirus pandemic. It was sent to the 91 current members on email - apologies to those not on email but time is limited. The purpose of the questionnaire was to understand which options may be considered viable.

The society received 68 responses which seemed a very good response rate of 75%. Of these, 40 indicated they regularly attended meeting. Of those 40, 28 were willing to consider socially distanced meetings assuming that they were allowed and measures put in place. The options of watching digitally using Zoom or YouTube both garnered 48 positive responses from all respondents.

The high interest in Zoom and/or YouTube appears to indicate an interest from those not living locally or unable to normally attend meetings being interested in viewing the meetings. Hopefully the society may be able to address this in the future.

So whilst there was sufficient demand for socially distanced meetings the situation remains that local halls are still closed and this makes it currently impossible to hold them. The committee has therefore taken the decision to hold meetings on Zoom in September, October and November. A decision on 2021 will be made closer to the time.

A further complication is, for a number of good reasons, not all our speakers are willing to give their lectures over Zoom so this has slightly complicated the lecture programme for this Autumn.

Offer: Glaven Historians for Sale

A set of Glaven Historian Journals Nos 1 – 16; most of them belonged to Anne Maw - a stalwart of the Society - who died in 2019. Donations of £48 or over, towards BAHS funds, accepted (a bargain at only £3 per journal!).

Further details from the BAHS Secretary on 01263 74030 or secretary-bahs@bahs.uk

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due from 1st September for the year 2020/21.

Membership rates are unchanged at:

- Individual £12
 - Family £18
 - Corporate £25
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Payment of Subscriptions

For the 2020/21 membership year the society will offer the option of paying by **standing order** as well as by cheque. Sadly, for now, the option to pay subscriptions at meetings is not possible.

Details on how to make payment will be issued soon.

Joining BAHS

If you are not a member and wish to join you may join online or download our membership form from the BAHS website.

[Click here](#) to join.

AGM

This year's Annual General Meeting will be held via Zoom on Tuesday 27th October, followed by the October lecture.

A link to all the required documents will be circulated in advance via email, plus printed copies for those not online.

The timetable and details on joining the AGM Zoom conference will be given prior to the AGM.

History Centre

The History Centre is a small confined area and remains closed during the pandemic. This will be reviewed by the committee as and when Government guidelines change.

Information Emails

Members automatically receive emails.

Non-members may receive information emails by signing-up.

[Information Emails sign-up](#)

About the Newsletter

The society is using mailjet.com for the creating and distribution of the newsletter. Mailjet has been used by the society for a couple of years for the normal distribution of our information emails so we have some experience of it. It was one of the first companies in this area claiming to have a complete implementation of all GDPR's rigid requirements.

We import our email list into mailjet on a regular basis but it may lag slightly behind our membership system's records. If you choose to unsubscribe by using the link at the end of the newsletter this will take effect in mailjet but you may still receive information emails.

A major benefit of mailjet is that the newsletters produced may be read as an email or if the formatting isn't to your liking you may view an online version - the link is at the top of every newsletter.

For the society the benefit of a digital newsletter is both in reduced costs and immediacy as an issue may be produced quickly and without the need to worry about filling 2, 4 or 8 pages. For the committee the work involved in assembling a digital newsletter is much reduced as the production and distribution stages are significantly reduced if not eradicated.

Mailjet allows multi-column layout. This issue uses single and double column entries. The layout that you see depends on the device you are reading the newsletter on and your email system so it is possible you may just see a single column layout. If you choose to print the newsletter it prints as a single column layout.

However we are still learning all the features of mailjet and, no doubt, new features will be added so watch this space.

BAHS Committee

Chairman: Richard Kelham [Temporary] chair@bahs.uk

Secretary: Diana Cooke secretary-bahs@bahs.uk

History Centre: historycentre@bahs.uk

History Centre Records: John Wright john.wright@bahs.uk

Membership Secretary: Bridget Candy membership@bahs.uk

Publications: Roger Bland publications@bahs.uk

Treasurer: Richard Daley treasurer@bahs.uk

Lecture Programme Manager: Roger Bland [Temporary]

lecture.programme@bahs.uk

Sales Organiser: Jan Semple sales@bahs.uk

Website Organiser: Richard Daley webmaster@bahs.uk
