



BAHS Digital Newsletter

Issue 5

18th May 2021

www.bahs.uk

Welcome

Welcome to the fifth digital newsletter of the Blakeney Area Historical Society. This newsletter is being sent to all current and past members plus individuals who have signed up to our information emails.

Printing the newsletter: A few days after the digital newsletter is published a copy is placed on the website. If you wish to print the newsletter it is best to use the one on the website.

In this newsletter, along with much else, we have a follow up on the search for boat LN164 and a link to an interview with its builder, Howard Brett; the first part of the story of La Belle Ruby; and mention of an award for Margaret Bird. John Wright has also provided a number of contributions from the History Centre including one on camping – but not camping as you may know it.

The editor would like to thank all those who have provided contributions to this and previous issues as they make it possible to publish the newsletter. Contributions are always welcome.

Finally, before you settle down to read the newsletter, please note that information contained in the newsletter is copyright of the author and is published as provided and with their permission. Despite best efforts the occasional mistake may slip through. If so, please blame the editor not the contributors.

Richard Daley

2021 Lectures

We recently concluded the second half of lectures for the 2020/21 membership year with a talk by Dr. Ben Cartwright titled 'Travels in the footsteps of James Baillie Fraser' which took us, possibly, the furthest distance from North Norfolk of any of our talks. When time allows a recording of the talk will appear on the BAHS website.

The new series of lectures will start after our summer break on Tuesday 28th September 2021. Details will be made available closer to the time

Recorded Lectures

Lectures that have been recorded may be viewed by visiting [lecture recordings](#).

Blakeney Area Historical Society

Boat LN164: *Gypsy Lass*

In Issue 4 of the newsletter a request for information on boat LN164 was made by Helen Penny as her gt, gt, gt, gt, grandfather Howard Brett built it.

The initial breakthrough came when member Serica East found a postcard with boat 164 on it with the name *Gypsy Lass*. It appeared on the website pinterest with the title "BLAKENEY GIPSY LASS FISHING BOAT TURNED HOUSEBOAT NORFOLK c1908".



A search of the BAHS website found a further reference to *Gypsy Lass* in [Issue 35](#) (July 2013) of the old printed newsletter.

On page 6 a letter from another member, Marcus Wainwright, was published relating to the serious aircraft accident at Morston in 1934. Alongside his letter he provided a photograph of the aircraft with the comment that the photo came from his family history recorded in the Log of the Good Ship *Gypsy Lass*.

On contacting Marcus he provided some background and further pictures taken from the Log. This information was provided to Helen and both Helen and Marcus agreed to share this information via this newsletter.

The *Gypsy Lass* was a boat bought by my family pre-WW1 and is a great family story recorded in a massive book called The Log of the Good Ship *Gypsy Lass* which I have. It contains many references to old Blakeney but it is essentially about our family, the Dews, rather than an historical record and post-1939 is a family holiday record with photos and notes.

The *Gypsy Lass* was an old fishing smack LN164 bought from John Johnson of Blakeney by my family in 1907 for £50.



Gipsy Lass - Smack

The Gipsy Lass smack before conversion



Gipsy Lass - Houseboat.

Completion of the conversion of Gipsy Lass to a houseboat

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My great grand father Captain Thomas Dew was Harbour Master of Blakeney from 1866 to 1907 and local family members together with those who had moved away used to gather for holidays at Blakeney. There were 5 cousins (my father who was local was one of them) ranging in age from 17 to 21. They wanted to have a house boat that could be moored on the marshes along Agar creek to live in at holiday time. The Log became a record of their activities, some local events and stories they made up. It remained a central part of their holidays until the Great War 1914-18 during which time it became rather dilapidated. As time moved on with their own families and careers they lost interest. It remained on the marshes by Agar creek rotting away. Some ribs and keel were still visible in the 1960s but all has now disappeared in the mud.

Howard Brett was well known to the family and it was he, with occasional help from The Crew, who converted the old fishing smack LN164 into the house boat.

Marcus Wainwright



Howard Brett working on the conversion of the Gypsy Lass

So, from a simple enquiry about boat LN164 we have much more knowledge of where the boat originated, and who requested the conversion, alongside the knowledge of who did the conversion.

If you know any more of the history of this boat, please get in touch.

Richard Daley

Blakeney Area Historical Society

Howard Brett

During the hunt for boat LN164, Helen, whilst going through family papers, came across a newspaper article of an interview with Howard Brett of Cley. It was published on 11th October 1935 in the Norfolk Chronicle¹. With Helen Penny's permission, the transcript is on the BAHS website.

Here are the first three paragraphs which I'm sure grabbed the attention of the original audience – just as it will now grab your attention.

Stories of the days when Cley was an important coastal port with upwards of seventy boats ... Reminiscences of early boyhood and contact with smugglers ... thrilling yarns of shipwrecks and rescue attempts under great difficulties ... Mr Brett of Cley-next-the-Sea, can fascinate one for hours.

Eighty-four years of age, Mr Brett has spent 75 years in Cley and knows the place 'inside out'. He was born at Letheringsett and started work on a farm at the age of five, when 'I could hardly carry the pails' Mr Brett told our reporter in an interview.

Mr Brett had the awful experience of being frozen at the age of eight. He was keeping sheep in bitterly cold weather, colder than we are accustomed to now, and only remembers falling on a dirt-heap. Farm workers found him and carried him to his home unconscious, and a doctor stayed with him all day before he sufficiently recovered from his terrifying experience.

[Click here](#) to read the full transcript.

Richard Daley

La Belle Ruby

Brenda Palmer a resident of Blakeney and a BAHS member was born in Norwich. Her mother Ruby Cross (née Cholerton) performed professionally on stage as La Belle Ruby or with her sister Mona as La Belle Ruby Duo. In 1926 Ruby's family moved to Norwich and she came home in 1927 to perform at the Thatched House Theatre, the building that later became part of Bonds.

The first part of this article charts Ruby's life and career along with a transcription of a newspaper interview published in Whiffler's City column of the Eastern Evening News on Saturday March 19, 1977.

Early Life

Ruby was born in Hitchin, Hertfordshire, on 26 March 1908 to Laurie Stanley and Marren Cholerton .

In the 1911 census, the family were living in Scarborough at 39 Tennyson Avenue. The census recorded her father's occupation as Newspaper Sub-Editor. Ruby remembered watching the Zeppelins over Scarborough during WWI.

At some point the family moved to Hereford where her father was Managing Editor of the Hereford Mercury. Ruby won a scholarship to Hereford High School.

¹ When the digital newsletter was first published the date given for this article was 26th October 1935 and the publication unknown. The date has since been revised and the publication identified.

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Leaving Home

Ruby left home in Hereford at 16, as mentioned in the newspaper interview, to go on the stage.

Her family moved to Norwich in 1926 when her father became Managing Editor of the Norwich Mercury.



Ruby Cholerton aged 17yrs

Ruby's luggage when travelling between shows!



Was this Ruby's first professional stage appearance?

A poster for her show refers to her as La Belle Ruby with comments such as 'the lively girl in red', 'the merry musical maid' and 'an act that pleases both stalls and gallery'.

The act was successful with a poster mentioning over 18 dates played including Olympia Cardiff, Academy London W and Hippodrome Nuneaton.

Between March and June 1927 the act became La Belle Ruby Duo when her younger sister Mona joined her.



Mona joined Ruby to become La Belle Ruby Duo

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Newspaper Interview, March 19, 1977

Ruby on stage in Bonds china department

WHEN Ruby Cross walks into Bonds blanket department she visualises the auditorium of a theatre and when she is in the china section she feels she is back on the stage where she once performed.

For Ruby, who was once half of La Belle Ruby Duo, a variety act, the store will always be the Thatched House Theatre, the building that was replaced by Bonds.

Fifty years ago Ruby and her sister came to Norwich to appear at the theatre in their musical comedy act. She remembered those days as she read the articles and correspondence in the "Eastern Evening News" about the city's old cinemas and theatres and she noted that amid all the reminiscing the voice of the artist had not yet been heard....

Appearing at the Thatched House in 1927 during Christmas week was also an excuse for Ruby to come home to Norwich to visit her parents, who moved to the city in 1926.

Her father, Mr. Laurie Stanley Cholerton, who was managing editor of the "Norwich Mercury" series, was the inspiration and drive behind her career on the stage.

Mr. Cholerton, himself a composer, instrumentalist, lyricist and photographer, taught Ruby to sing and play 11 musical instruments! Among them were the lyra harp, the ocarina, a set of concertinas, the timpano, bagpipes and the saxophone.

"Teaching me was an excuse for him to go out and buy as many instruments as possible!" comments Ruby. "A fascinating man, he taught me everything I knew about music and the stage. When I was 16 I left our Hereford home with several hundredweight of luggage (instruments) and a repertoire of 45 songs. I crossed London, arrived in Folkestone – where I was to play at the Pier theatre – to find digs, alone. Quite unheard of in those days!"

Glimpses...

As Ruby, now 69 and living at 61, Newmarket Street, sat and recalled stories from her days on the boards. I could catch some of the vivacity and exuberance she must have shown as the "merry and bright musical maid."

She remembers playing to audiences of up to 3000 in theatres all over the country. On several occasions she was asked by notabilities, such as Lady Pole of Gloucestershire and the Duke of Portland, to perform at private parties and garden Fetes. "I got a glimpse of all walks of life." she said.

Life with a roving reporter father instilled in her a love of travelling and a constant magpie search for information.

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"Whenever I meet someone I can always tell them about the town where they are from – whether it be Peterhead in Scotland, or Bolsover in Derbyshire. Whichever town I used to be in, between shows and rehearsals, I visited the museums, libraries and famous buildings, even the graveyards," she said.

Marriage

Ruby married Norwich born engineer Stanley Abiathar Cross on 30th October 1929 and that would have heralded the end of her stage career **continued in the next newsletter.**

Brenda Palmer & Richard Daley

Mary Hardy volumes Highly Commended in Rural History prize 2021



Mary Hardy in 1785 by Huquier

All Margaret Bird's volumes on the Letheringsett diarist Mary Hardy gained Highly Commended in the Thirsk Prize for the Best Book in British or Irish Rural or Agrarian History 2021.

In the YouTube clip available from link below the books are described as "an amazing source" in the Prize announcement published online on 20th April 2021.

[Read more...](#)

Margaret Bird

The History Centre

British Association for Local History (BALH)

The History Centre has received the four most recent issues of *The Local Historian*, the quarterly journal produced by the British Association for Local History (BALH), a federation to which many local history societies belong. The articles are not 'academic' but are of the kind written for *The Glaven Historian*. Each issue carries reviews of recent publications and also lists the contents of journals produced by member societies. In the recent issues are reviews of several books relating to Norfolk, including:

A Vicar in Victorian Norfolk: The life and times of Benjamin Armstrong (1817-1890)

Susanna Wade-Martins, 2018.

Benjamin Armstrong was vicar of Dereham from 1850 to 1888 and kept a diary for 46 years covering his church duties, his work among parishioners, and his family life. Susanna describes him as austere and snobbish, so perhaps it's not surprising that on a visit to a London theatre he was outraged by the dancing girls.

Susanna gave a Zoom talk to the Society recently on Benjamin Armstrong. This talk, with its accompanying illustrations, has been retained on the BAHS website and can be viewed by [clicking here](#).

George Roberts MP : A life that did different

Frank Meeres, 2019.

George Roberts (1868-1928) was the first Labour MP elected in Norfolk, although he changed parties twice during his time as MP for Norwich (1906-1923). As Minister for Food Control in the wartime Coalition Government he 'immediately sought to increase the strength and availability of beer'. The review doesn't say if he succeeded.

The Register of John Salmon, Bishop of Norwich 1299-1325

Edited by Elizabeth Gemmill, 2019.

Bishop Salmon's register is the earliest surviving for the Norwich diocese. It records 2,149 appointments made to churches, chapels, chantries and religious houses in the 1,227 parishes within the diocese. The Glaven villages are presumably included – Blakeney, Cley and Wiveton all had new incumbents during this period.

The Norwich Chamberlains' Accounts 1539/40-1544/45

Carole Rawcliffe, 2019.

These accounts contain much information about what was then the largest provincial city in England. They feature sanitation problems, the conversion of the former Dominican friary (Blackfriars) to civic uses, and a wide variety of buildings and activities.

Mary Hardy and her World

Margaret Bird, 2020, in four volumes.

These substantial volumes (3,240 pages in total) are based on the diaries that Mary, the wife of William Hardy of Letheringsett, kept from 1773 until her death in 1809.

Their titles are:

1. *A working family*
2. *Beer and the working year*
3. *Spiritual and social forces*
4. *Under sail and under arms.*

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There is no room here to describe their contents but it can be said that the reviewers are full of admiration for Margaret's extensive research and for the quality of the content and presentation. The books, together with the preceding four volumes containing the text of the diaries, can be seen in the History Centre when it reopens (although they cannot be borrowed).

The BALH website carries many additional reviews, and new ones added last year include:

- *The Fall of the Yarmouth Suspension Bridge : A Norfolk disaster, by Garrett Davies, 2020.*
- *The Yellow Caravan : Camping round Norfolk in 1912, by Juliet Webster, 2019.*

Camping

One of the articles in the latest issue of *The Local Historian* (January 2021) describes another sort of 'Camping round Norfolk': the sport of camping as once played across East Anglia. Many people will have read that camping was a hazardous and unruly sport in which two teams tried to manipulate a ball across the base line of their opponents. Medieval in origin, it can be said to be the forerunner of both football and rugby.

In his article, Suffolk historian David Dymond says that in Old English 'camp' carried the meaning of 'contest' or 'fight'. In East Anglia the word appears in a number of place-names, including Camping Hill in Stiffkey. In a Morston fieldbook from the Tudor period the 'camping land' was a field behind the present Anchor Inn. Such names occur throughout Norfolk and Suffolk and in the eastern parts of Cambridgeshire but there are very few elsewhere.

This does not mean that camping was confined to East Anglia. Beyond Cambridge 'camping' gives way to other place-name elements including 'fairstead' and 'football'. The names change but the sport was essentially the same: what was called football in other areas was camping in East Anglia. Most research has concentrated on finding the early sites where it was played; much less is known about how it was played.

David's article supplies some information about this, but only from the 1700s and 1800s when scattered evidence appears in local newspapers. By then camping was becoming more organised although the rules were often set by each community, and even for individual matches. Formal games were often organised by publicans and innkeepers who would set a date, rope off a pitch, assemble teams and sometimes offer prizes. Their intention was to draw in crowds to whom they could sell beer and refreshments in order to make a profit. Camping was also played informally by people as a spare-time activity, much as youths might enjoy a kickabout game of football today.

The article describes some of the rules, and how they varied over space and time. The variations were grouped loosely into 'civil' and 'rough'. In the former the emphasis was on skill, while the latter included elements of boxing and wrestling. During the 1800s the term 'camping' died out and the rules gradually crystallised into the various football codes that are employed today in Britain and elsewhere, including Ireland and Australia. David Dymond is also the author of the article on camping which appears in *An Historical Atlas of Norfolk* (3rd edition, 2005) and which can be treated as a summary of the article in *The Local Historian*.

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Had David taken his article further, he might have described how people began to set up regular teams which became the football clubs of today. Those now playing in the English Premier League came into being towards the end of the 1800s. Some were founded by churchgoers (Fulham, Manchester City, Southampton) and some by schoolboys (Wolves, Leicester). Others were formed by cricketers wanting a game to play in winter (Aston Villa, Newcastle, Tottenham) and four were set up by factory workers (Arsenal, Manchester Utd, West Bromwich Albion, West Ham). The recent storm in the soccer world suggests that some of the rich foreign owners of the biggest English clubs did not appreciate their history and the significance it still has.

Tenuous they may be, but Blakeney does have early links to West Ham Utd, founded by workers at the Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company at Blackwall on the Thames in 1895. Here was built the Royal Albert Bridge, designed by Brunel and erected by Robert Brereton from Blakeney. The firm also built RNLI lifeboats, among them the Caroline stationed at Blakeney between 1908 and 1935.

The Duke

As far as we know the Duke of Edinburgh had no connection with this Society but he made a number of visits to Cley marshes and wrote the Foreword to the book written by wardens Billy and Bernard Bishop. Billy once described a visit which the Duke and the young Prince Charles had made to the reserve. The Prince addressed a question to Billy but was reprimanded by his father who said 'I'm allowed to call him Billy but you must call him Mr Bishop'. As Billy said afterwards: "That's a funny thing. Everybody calls me Billy - the only person who has to call me Mr Bishop is the future King of England".

John Wright

In issue 4 we included some newspaper archives relating to Disease, Vaccines & Vaccination in Norfolk and said we would mention in this issue how we came across them. Well, there wasn't any magic involved, just a lot of internet searching using Google.

From a newspaper archive website we found a title for something that seemed of interest along with a date and name of the publication. Using this information another search found more material and we found ourselves on the website for the The Foxearth and District Local History Society.

It appears a member of this society, over an 18 year period, transcribed records from a number of publications from the records office in Bury St Edmunds for the period 1745 to 1950.

The newspapers transcribed were:

- Ipswich Journal
- Bury and Suffolk Herald
- Bury & Norwich Post
- Norfolk Chronicle
- Suffolk and Essex Free Press
- South-West Suffolk Echo
- Sudbury Post & Long Melford Gazette
- Haverhill Echo

There is more information on their website.

As the publications included the Bury & Norwich Post and Norfolk Chronicle it means there is some information on North Norfolk.

See Computer Tips & Tricks for a method of searching their website without using their search facilities.

Richard Daley

Blakeney Area Historical Society

Interesting Websites

Blakeney Harbour Association

The [Blakeney Harbour Association website](#) has a history page provided by Sue Gresham. Currently it has the following articles:

- Captain Grout of Greencroft
- Blakeney Disaster 1861
- SS Rosalie
- SS Vera
- SS Hjørdis

Layers of London

During a recent U3A talk on the London Blitz there was mention of a maps website for London called [layers of london](#). It is a map-based history website that overlays historical maps onto a map of London so you can visualise an area of London you are interested in. I used it to explore bomb damage in WWII in an area of London that interests me. There are maps on, for example, 'Medieval London, 1270 - 1300' and 'Before and After the Great Fire of London (1658-1669)'. There are lots more.

British Newspaper Archives

This [British Newspaper Archives website](#) allows searching for free but to view the newspaper pages you are interested in you need a subscription although it is possible to sign up for 7 days for free. There are over 42 million pages listed.

The website has used automatic character recognition of the newspaper pages to provide its search facilities. The variability of the conversion to text does, somewhat, reduce the effectiveness of the search facility but it is still likely to be of benefit.

The Times Archive

Another website in the same vein is the [Times Archive](#) which is also a subscription service. If you take the Times newspaper digitally then this is included in your subscription.

Richard Daley

On This Day: 18th May

1756

The Seven year's war between Britain and with France began.

1804

Napoleon Bonaparte proclaimed Emperor of France by the French Senate.

1812

John Bellingham was found guilty and sentenced to death for the assassination of Prime Minister, Spencer Perceval. Perceval is, to date, the only British Prime Minister to have been assassinated.

1919

Margot Fonteyn born.

1954

The European Convention on Human Rights came into force.

1974

India became the sixth nation to explode an atomic bomb.

1991

Helen Sharman was the first British astronaut to go into space on the Soviet Soyuz TM-12 which launched this day.

2014

AstraZenica rejected the American company Pfizer's final offer of \$63bn.

Richard Daley

Computer Tips & Tricks

This column of the newsletter whilst not about historical matters will offer tips and tricks that may help in improving your use of your computer and the Internet in general including for historical research.

In the article on The Foxearth and District Local History Society I suggested a method of searching their website without using their search facilities. You may prefer to use their search facilities but if you like, for example, Google's search capabilities then all you need to do is add the `site:foxearth.org.uk` to your search to restrict it to just their website. This technique works with most search engines.

If you were doing a search for smallpox norwich with Google then entering smallpox norwich would return around 570,000 results. If you thought the foxearth website might have something useful then entering `site:foxearth.org.uk smallpox norwich` would restrict your search to just the foxearth website and return around 49 results.

The use of site may be used to restrict a search to any website. So the search

`site:bahs.uk smallpox norwich`

returns, currently, just one result. When this newsletter is added to the website the number of hits will increase.

If I wish to find out what foxearth.org.uk has on burnham thorpe I use the search

`site:foxearth.org.uk burnham thorpe`.

This gives results about burnham thorpe but also thorpe hamlet and all the different burnhams. Changing the search to

`site:foxearth.org.uk "burnham thorpe"`

returns results for just burnham thorpe. It treats whatever is inside the quotes as if it were a single word.

Finally, and this is something I find most odd, the search:

`site:foxearth.org.uk burnham thorpe`

gives a different number of results to the search:

`burnham thorpe site:foxearth.org.uk`

Try it! I cannot really explain it but it does mean that searches on Google are variable for any number of reasons, including where Google thinks you are located.

Richard Daley

Blakeney Area Historical Society

Non-BAHS Activities

BALH Talks

The society is a member of the British Association for Local History. The BALH has published a collection of free ten-minute local history talks.

[Read more...](#)

Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society

The society is a member of the Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society. Their series of online lectures ended in March.

[Visit NNAS Website](#)

Norfolk Record Office

The Norfolk Record office has announced some online talks, including:

- How to ... Care for your Books and Documents at Home on May 25th
- History Talk – Painting the Broads on May 26th
- Introduction to House History - Online Workshop on May 27th
- History Talk – Discord, Dispute and Toleration in Reformation Norwich on June 9th
- Small Bites – Manor Court Records on June 18th

[Read more...](#)

Blakeney Area Historical Society

The BAHS

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.

Information Emails

If you receive this newsletter then you are receiving information emails.

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

[Information Emails sign-up](#)

Subscriptions

Subscriptions are due from 1st September for the year 2020/21. Membership rates are unchanged at:

- Individual £12
- Family £18
- Corporate £25

Renewals & Standing Orders

Many members have renewed their subscription using standing orders and others have paid online using faster payments.

If you can pay this way it helps as it creates less work for the membership secretary & treasurer. It also means less time standing in queues at the bank which, particularly in the current situation, is much appreciated by the treasurer.

If you are planning to renew, details may be found by [clicking here](#).

Helping the BAHS

The BAHS Committee has many things that it would like help with and you don't have to serve on the committee to be involved!

If interested please get in contact by emailing info@bahs.uk.

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.

History Centre Collection

The History Centre is always interested in items of historical relevance to the Blakeney Area. These may be old wills, deeds, scrapbooks, postcards, Blakeney Regatta programmes, ... the list is endless.

Please don't bin it before checking if it is of interest to the History Centre.

Blakeney Area Historical Society

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

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