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Editorial		2
John Wright	Blakeney Carmelite Friary	3
Eric Hotblack	Ploughing on: a Plough Pebble from Field Dalling	34
Frank Hawes	The 1586 map of Blakeney Harbour: some further questions	37
Rev Dr T J Fawcett	The 'Black Book of Stiffkey': some notes on the church of St John the Baptist, Stiffkey by the Rev C Harold Fitch	39
John Wright	The Blakeney Lifeboat Station	48
Richard Jefferson	The Cley 1914 – 1918 War Project	64
Contributors		76

## Editorial

Welcome to the seventeenth issue of the Glaven Historian, published on the thirtieth anniversary of the Blakeney Area Historical Society, with six papers on topics ranging from the medieval period to the twentieth century. 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 his 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. He notes that on six occasions between 1389 and 1533 the provincial chapter of the Carmelites was held in Blakeney, when perhaps a hundred friars would have gathered at the friary, and it is interesting to think that on these occasions Blakeney became the centre of the Carmelite order in England.

The next paper, by Eric Hotblack, a farmer and field-walker, is an investigation into an unusual polished flint that he found while fieldwalking at Field Dalling; he concludes that it was a plough pebble.

The 1586 map of Blakeney Harbour by John Darby, has been discussed in several issues of our journal,

and in a short note Frank Hawes highlights a number of anomalies in the map.

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 movables), 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.

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

Roger Bland  
Richard Kelham  
Editors

# Blakeney Carmelite Friary

John Wright

## Synopsis

*The Carmelites came to Norfolk in the 1240s and built friaries in Blakeney and Burnham Norton as well as in Norwich, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth. Blakeney was the last of these to be founded, sometime between 1304 and 1316. It provided support to the community for over 200 years before coming to an end in 1538 with Henry VIII's dissolution of all friaries and monasteries. While some friaries remain in a ruined state the Blakeney buildings have disappeared almost without trace. The written records are equally sparse and do not provide enough information for a coherent history of the friary. This article brings together both the written and the physical evidence that is currently available.*



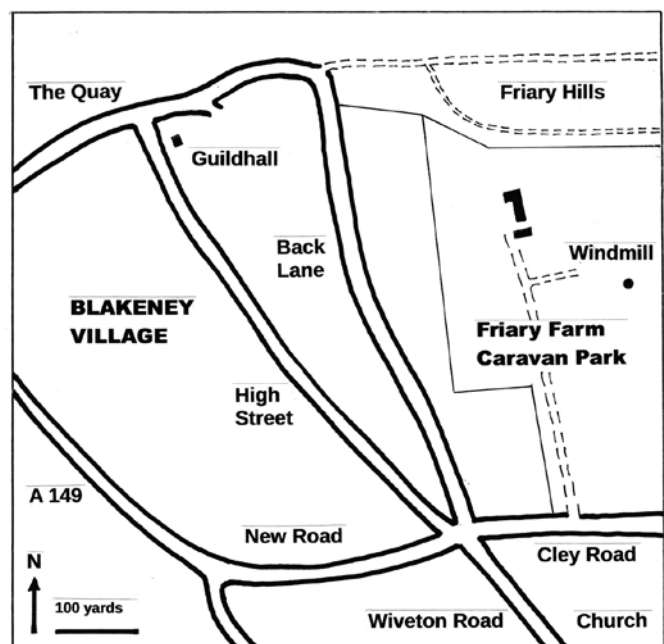
**Fig. 1** The high wall on the Friary Hills, 2001

## 1 Introduction

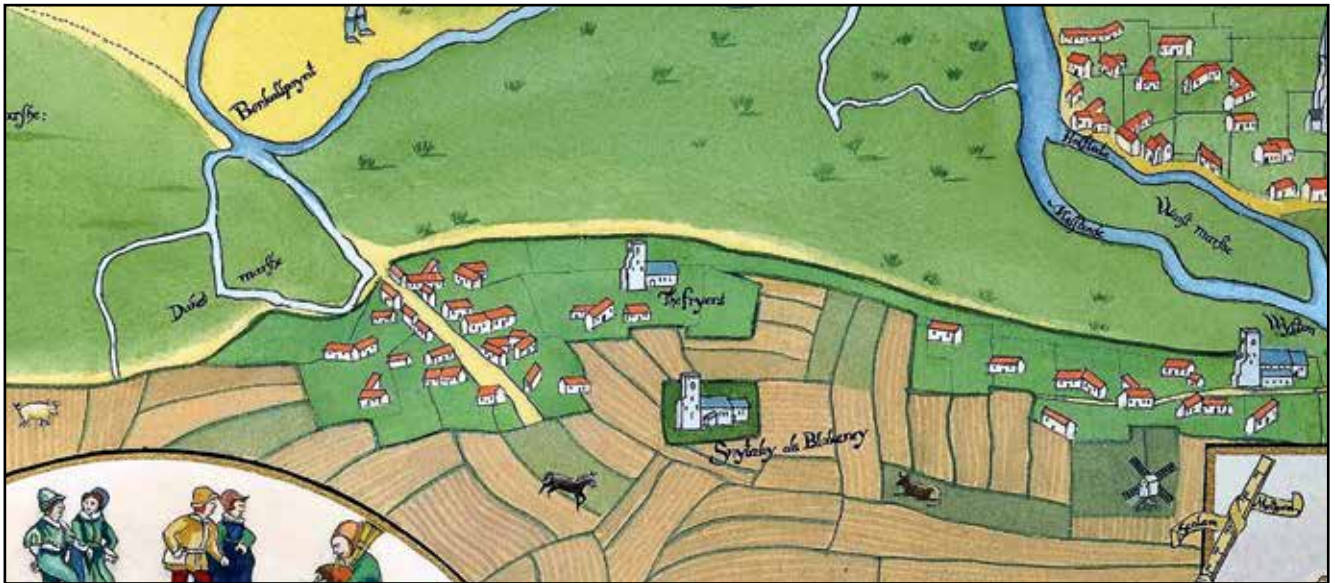
The Carmelite friary in Blakeney can no longer be seen. After a life of over 200 years it was extinguished by Henry VIII and its buildings so thoroughly demolished that only a few tiny fragments remain. Today the area once occupied by the friary is owned by the National Trust and leased out as a caravan park. It lies on the edge of Blakeney village, north of the main coast road and east of Back Lane (Fig. 2). After the Dissolution the friary grounds became agricultural land served by a farmhouse erected within the old friary buildings.

The history of the friary is almost as elusive as the physical structure. A few references appear in the records of central government, and bequests are made in local wills, but there is little else until the deeds transferring ownership from one party to another after the Dissolution. Some published comments by early document collectors are helpful though not always reliable.

Over the years a few objects from the time of the friary have come to light, either by accident or by deliberate digging, but there has been no systematic study of the area. It is not under threat from development so there has been no good reason for professional excavation, and the presence of caravans and trees make



**Fig. 2** The location of Blakeney friary on the eastern side of the village



**Fig. 3 The location of Blakeney friary on a map by John Darby, 1586**

much of the area inconvenient for geophysical surveys. The site is not a scheduled Ancient Monument and so does not have the protection that the relevant Act would provide.

The dearth of documents and the lack of physical studies have discouraged attempts to write a coherent history of the friary. This article presents what is known, concentrating on the friary itself but also outlining the history of the site during the long period since its demise. Section 2 describes briefly the arrival of the Carmelites, and (in separate boxes) the arrival of other orders of friars and monks and how Chaucer treated them in his *Canterbury Tales*. The third section describes the origin of Blakeney friary and the activities of the friars. The next looks at how the Dissolution evolved and at the friary in its last years and beyond. Section 5 brings together such evidence as there is about the friary grounds, the buildings and the finds from the site. The final section suggests, in the form of a plan, the possible extent and layout of the friary complex.

Early documents often use the name 'Snitterley' when referring to Blakeney. While some people have suggested that the alternative name denoted another settlement now lost to the sea, the evidence is that both names relate to the present village. In this article the friary 'site' or 'precinct' refers to the area which would have contained the buildings, while 'estate' refers to the rest of the land in the friars' ownership. Other terms are used for the whole area.

## 2 The Carmelites

Mention of a medieval friar may bring to mind a large jovial fellow sharing the adventures of Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest during the reign of King Richard I. Yet the earliest tales do not mention Friar Tuck. He was only added to the stories during the 1400s, the name being the alias of Stephen Stafford, a chaplain who spent some years as a notorious outlaw committing robberies and worse. And not until the 1500s did the stories settle on Richard's reign as the time of Robin Hood's activities. It mattered not that Richard reigned from 1189 to 1199 and that

the first friars did not reach England until a generation later. The Dominicans and Franciscans arrived in the early 1220s and the Carmelites and Augustinians some 20 years later.

It was not a coincidence that these four orders of friars arrived in such a short space of time. The end of the 1100s was a time of crisis for western Christianity which saw itself assailed on all sides. The Third Crusade had failed to retake Jerusalem after its capture by Saladin in 1187, Spain was being lost to Islam, and the Tartars were soon to sack Budapest. It was widely recognised that there was laxity in the old monastic orders, too much wealth and worldliness among senior churchmen, and little impetus in spreading the gospel. There was also some dissatisfaction with the quality of the clergy.

Pope Innocent III, in office from 1198 to 1216, began significant reforms. In particular he found a role for the charismatic Francis of Assisi, enabling him to found a mendicant order, one that followed the example of Christ: preaching, hearing confessions and providing care while living on the road, rather than living in an enclosed community like a monastery. Others took the same path and before long friars had established systems of pastoral care which paralleled those of the secular clergy. An important difference was that friars were not confined to particular parishes but could move between friaries. It was natural for the clergy to resent such competition, and not until 1300 was there some agreement about the role of friars in the community. One element of that was that the laity could be buried in friaries but a quarter of the resulting dues and legacies was to go to the parish clergy.

The Carmelite friars took their name from Mount Carmel (near the modern port of Haifa) in Palestine, the traditional place of Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal. A group of men, mostly crusaders from Europe, gathered there to live as hermits in the 1150s according to tradition although the earliest records date from the 1190s. Some time between 1206 and 1214 they sought and received from the Patriarch of Jerusalem a 'Rule' to govern how they should live. This consisted of sixteen articles relating to prayer, silence, abstinence from meat, winter fasting, vows of poverty, residence in individual cells and obedience to



their prior (a term denoting first among equals). Little more is known about them until 1238 when, in response to Muslim dominance, many left the area and moved westwards. The first Carmelites brought to England, by the crusader Sir Richard de Grey, were in London by January 1242.

The initial Carmelite Rule was amended to reflect the different circumstances encountered in England compared with their contemplative origins in the Palestinian landscape. In 1247 the Carmelites adopted mendicant status which led to a more communal way of life, actively begging for food and clothing (but not for money), and providing some pastoral care for local communities. In this they were following the example of other orders of mendicant friars.

A chronological list of all 39 Carmelite houses in England shows that the first four houses, all established between 1242 and 1247, were at Hulne (near Alnwick), Aylesford (near Maidstone), Lossenham (in Kent) and Bradmer (in Burnham Norton parish, Norfolk). Norwich was 10th (1256), King's Lynn 11th (1260) and Blakeney 33rd (1304-16). The first four houses were all in minor settlements, making a distinction between the urban settings of Dominican and Franciscan friaries, and the wastelands chosen by Cistercian monks. The revision of the Carmelite Rule in 1247 allowed all subsequent friaries to be established in towns so that the friars could survive more easily as mendicants. Even so, many friaries struggled financially and were very poor when finally closed down.<sup>1</sup>

Carmelites were organised into provinces, of which England was one, each being headed by a Prior Provincial (or just 'Provincial'). Subdivision of the English province produced four 'distinctions' named after the centres of London, Norwich, Oxford and York, the Norwich distinction being the smallest with just the five Norfolk houses. Provincial chapters (or meetings) were held around the country, the first being at Aylesford in 1245. Some houses were chosen more often than others, and some not at all, size and accessibility perhaps the determining factors. Around 100 Carmelites would attend the provincial chapter, each house sending its prior and a chosen companion. Some of these would need to find lodging in neighbouring friaries or monastic houses.

The head of the Carmelite Order was the 'Prior General', based in Rome. On occasions he would tour the various provinces, visiting every friary to interview the members of the community and to assess the state of religious observance. If unable to do so in person, the Prior General would appoint a Provincial to act on his behalf as 'Vicar General'. No register of the Prior Generals survives before that of Peter Terrasse who held that position in Rome from 1503 to 1511. It includes a record of his visit to England but little is said about any action taken at each house, other than relaxations to ease daily life.

At the Dissolution nearly all written records of the friaries were lost so it is difficult to construct histories of individual houses.<sup>2</sup> The first step should have been a petition to be allowed to receive a gift of land followed by an inquiry to see if anyone would be harmed by the action. The main issue was to see what tax liabilities or other obligations attached to the property and what would happen to them. If a jury gave approval a licence was issued, although sometimes friaries received a pardon for receiving land without a licence. Carmelites owned their land outright, or more strictly in *frank al-moin*, tenure on condition of praying for the soul of the donor.

### **Friars and Monks**

The Dominicans (black friars), founded by St Dominic, came to Britain in 1221 and the Franciscans (grey friars), founded by St Francis of Assisi, arrived in 1224. The Carmelites had arrived by 1242, changing their cloaks patterned in black and white for white ones in 1287 from which time they were known as the white friars. The Augustinians, taking their Rule from St Augustine, were founded in 1244 although not formally constituted until 1256. These were the four main orders of friars and all of them, together with some smaller ones, were to experience changes in their rules, practices, relative importance and reputation during the 300 years or so between their arrival and Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries and friaries.

Friars (from the Latin 'frater' meaning 'brother') took vows of poverty and obedience but their primary role was to support their local communities rather than to live in cloistered devotion. They did not stay where they first joined but moved around and spent time in other houses. Friars normally wore a long woollen robe, a hooded cape and a rope belt with rosary and cross attached. They wore sandals (without socks) and carried a pouch containing a prayer book and a few personal possessions. They rose early and attended services in the church but the daily routine in friaries is not well known, being less structured than that in monasteries. Friars spent much time in their local communities, preaching, hearing confessions (if licensed to do so), treating the sick, visiting the elderly, and collecting alms. Within the friary they studied, taught children, fulfilled the spiritual requests of testators, and supervised building projects and the work of their servants.

For comparison, monasteries had been present in England for over 1,000 years before the Dissolution. The word 'monk' is from a Greek word meaning 'alone' and monasteries began as groups of hermits – as friaries were to do later. St Benedict is regarded as the founder of monasticism as an organised movement in western Europe, although Celtic monasticism was established in Ireland and Scotland before his time. In about AD 530 Benedict wrote a set of precepts to guide men (or women) living together under the authority of an abbot.

The first monastery in England was set up by St Augustine in Canterbury in 598. Many more followed during the Anglo-Saxon period, and an unknown number of these, including Jarrow and Lindisfarne, were looted by Vikings. There was much variety in their physical form and in the way they operated. St Benedict's Rule became a guide for many autonomous houses but it was two centuries before the 'Benedictines' were seen as an organised religious order.

Other groups modified the Rule of St Benedict. Cluny, established in SW France in 910, was the source of the first Cluniac priory in England, at Lewes in 1077. The Carthusians trace their origin to St Bruno in the Chartreuse mountains of the French Alps in 1084 and were first established in England in 1181. The Cistercians took their name from Cîteaux in Burgundy where, in 1099, they returned to the original rules of St Benedict. Their first abbey in England was established in 1188. As part of the resurgence of monasticism under Norman rule, Binham Priory was founded in 1091 as a cell of the Benedictines at St Albans.

The primary function of monks was to pray and work for their keep but they kept largely apart from the rest of society, and although some monasteries were associated with cathedrals many were built well away from towns. In their later years monasteries became important economic centres, and some Cistercian abbeys in particular, with their sheep and wool production, became very wealthy.

### **Chaucer: The Satirical View**

A portrayal of a medieval friar appears in the *Canterbury Tales*, written during the 1390s, just before Chaucer's death in 1400. His characters are lively people but they are still stereotypes of their day. Friars were often portrayed then as mercenary beggars who befriended women in their homes and who valued good living above helping the poor. In the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer describes his friar as being on good terms with innkeepers and barmaids, good company with his music and singing, and clad in the best quality 'double-worsted' clothing. He kept trinkets up his sleeve for the ladies and was adept at squeezing money from rich and poor alike. Chaucer enlarged on these characteristics in the summoner's tale about a friar wheeling his way around the community and getting his comeuppance.

This view of friars and their nefarious activities was put about mainly by the secular clergy, often jealous of the friars' popularity as preachers and confessors. Parish priests did not usually have the learning that friars had acquired and they lost income if parishioners were buried in a friary instead of the parish churchyard. By Chaucer's time friars had been present in Britain for over 150 years and were not receiving the uncritical support they had enjoyed earlier.

The satirical view is not without some foundation. The Patent Rolls (10th July 1352) record that the king took action against some Carmelite friars 'now vagabond in secular attire' and others who 'although wearing the habit of the order ... stay without the closes of the friars and are not afraid to mingle in various unwonted things ... all sheriffs to arrest such vagabond friars ... and deliver them to some house of the order ... to be chastised according to the discipline of the order.' Perhaps this was a consequence of the Black Death in 1348/9.

Chaucer's monk fares little better than the friar. He is fat from good eating, well dressed in fur-lined clothes, and keeps horses and greyhounds for hunting. He thinks it old-fashioned that monks should live apart from society, and far from his vow of poverty lives more like a noble.

In Chaucer's poem only the parson escapes his rather jaundiced view of all the religious people on the pilgrimage. In this he is reflecting a common view amongst lay people, despite the considerable support for the catholic religion.



### **3 The Friary: Birth And Rise**

#### **The Origins of the Friary**

When the Carmelite friaries were being established the Glaven villages were among the richest in the county, their wealth coming from fishing and maritime trade. A measure of this can be seen in the taxation records of 1334 which provide a figure for every settlement in the country. In Norfolk there are some relatively high figures in western areas, especially in the fenlands, but in the rest of the county only Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Lynn, the market towns and Worstead have a higher assessment than Wiveton. The figures for Blakeney and Cley are also high so these three villages had a total tax burden of £35, just a few shillings more than that of the four parishes making up the trading centre at Burnham. For comparison, Lynn was assessed at £50. Blakeney was a prosperous village with access by sea to London and other east coast harbours, with the pilgrimage centre of Walsingham close by, and would not then have seemed out of place in the list of towns with Carmelite friaries.<sup>3</sup>

For many years 1296 was the assumed date for the beginning of Blakeney friary. Blomefield and subsequent authors record that copyhold tenants of William Roos and his wife Maud gave 13½ acres to the Carmelites with the consent of the king and their lord. They were to pray for William and Maud, who gave them money to build their church and houses.<sup>4</sup>

The details are set out in the Victoria County History (VCH).<sup>5</sup>

At Blakeney alias Snitterley a house of White Friars, dedicated to the honour of the Blessed Virgin, was established in 1296 when John and Michael Storm and John and Thomas Thobury, copyhold tenants of Sir William Roos, lord of the town, gave 13½ acres of land to the Carmelites with the consent of the king and the lord. The friars were to build a chapel and necessary buildings on the site and to pray for Sir William Roos and Lady Maud his wife as their principal founders. Sir William gave them 100 marks<sup>6</sup> towards building their church and houses, and promised to build their hall and kitchen, as well as proper chambers suitable for him and his heirs whenever they should think proper to stay there. The church and all offices were not completed until 1321.

This text reads as a summary of Blomefield's account which makes it clear, as the VCH does not, that the kitchen is for the 'guesthouse', not the friars:

... their principal founders who gave them 100 marks, to build their church and houses, and promise to build their hall, with a kitchen and chambers, proper and convenient for the reception of them and their heirs, with liberty for them at all times, of free entry and exit whenever they shall think proper to come and stay there; the said Sir William and his heirs repairing the same ...

The information provided by Blomefield and the VCH comes from a foundation document which is no longer accepted as being wholly accurate.<sup>7</sup> In particular, the Patent Rolls show that 13½ acres were given to the Carmelites not in 1296 but over the period from 1329 to 1352. The document also uses a title for the Carmelite Order which was not in use until the late 1300s. This does not necessarily mean that the document was intended to deceive. It is more likely to be



the result of amalgamating information from various sources in order to provide a foundation document in the absence of an original one.

In 1304 an inquisition was ordered to see if it would be 'to the damage of the king or others' to allow Michael le Bret to grant 1½ acres in Blakeney to the Carmelite friars in *frank almoin*.<sup>8</sup> There is no indication that the friars were already on the site. In 1316 the friars were pardoned for acquiring in *mortmain* (free of all feudal obligations) 1½ acres from Michael le Bret 'and entering thereon without licence of the late king'. Edward 1st had died in 1307. Licence was also given for them to build their houses on the land and to occupy them.<sup>9</sup> This appears to mean that the friars had already started to build there, perhaps before 1307, and a note in the margin of the Rolls seems to say so.<sup>10</sup>

Another licence was given in 1329 for the prior and friars to receive in *mortmain* land adjacent to their house for its enlargement.<sup>11</sup> Half an acre was provided by John Frere and Thomas Estle 'separately' and another half acre by John Tobur and Richard Storm 'collectively'. Two years later John Tobur the younger and Richard Storm received licence to give 4 acres<sup>12</sup> and in 1337 John Storm was licensed to give the same amount.<sup>13</sup> Then in 1352, just three years after the Black Death, Thomas Tobur received permission to give the friars a further 4½ acres.<sup>14</sup>

The grants made between 1329 and 1352 amount to 13½ acres, and the original grant of 1½ acres by Michael le Bret brings the total to 15 acres. The two half-acres of land given to the friars in 1329 were said to be 'adjacent' to their first piece, but subsequent gifts were all for the 'enlargement of their dwelling place'. It is therefore not certain that this land actually adjoined the original pieces, but land held by friaries was usually in one block rather than scattered. It was used by the friars for their own subsistence and for raising income to help the local community. It was not necessarily all agricultural land: there could be buildings that could be put to commercial use although none are mentioned at Blakeney.

There is no known record of more land being gifted to the friary, although there was one attempt. In 1500 James Andrews of Wiveton bequeathed 10 acres of free land to the friary so that the prior and his successor should find a friar to sing for his soul every day 'in time to come everlasting'. If the legacy was refused the land was to be sold and one secular priest found with half the money. It is not clear that the prior accepted the offer.

The chronological listing of Carmelite houses dates from before the Dissolution and was used by various authors including John Bale (1495-1563), a prominent Carmelite known to be familiar with the records of the province. In which case there needs to be some reason why Blakeney friary, known to be in existence before 1316, is placed after Scarborough with its foundation date of 1319. The answer is unknown but may lie in difficulties associated with the establishment of the friary, such as the need for a retrospective licence and the apparent lack of an authentic foundation document. Or perhaps there was some delay in erecting the buildings. Before a house could be formally recognised it had to have the right to vote in chapter which itself required a certain number of friars and a prior as head, although at the time only four friars were needed as a minimum.

The founder of the friary, William de Roos (or Ros), the eldest son of Robert de Roos of Helmsley (also

known as Hamlake) in Yorkshire, was born about 1255. He was an unsuccessful claimant to the Scottish throne in 1292, but after military service in Scotland he became the King's Lieutenant there in 1307. He had returned to his estates in Yorkshire by the time of his death in 1316 and was buried in Kirkham Priory. His estates elsewhere included manors in Blakeney, Holt and Letheringsett.

Some time before 1287 William married Maud de Vaux, the younger daughter of John de Vaux. John had been made Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1256 and held about 40 manors in eastern England which on his death in 1288 were divided between his two daughters. Maud, who inherited lands in Lincolnshire, died some time between 1312 and 1316 and was buried in the Augustinian abbey at Pentney, which had been founded by the de Vaux family.

The main land donors to the friary, the Storm and Tobur families, were prominent in the Glaven valley in the 1300s. In the poll tax of 1327 the assessment for John Storm of Wiveton was second only to John Tobur, and in the 1332 poll tax these two men had the highest figure in the village, with William Storm having the next highest. In Blakeney, Richard Storm's tax was one of the highest in both years, and John Storm of Cley had one of the highest figures there in 1327.<sup>15</sup>

A generation later Thomas Storm, bailiff of Blakeney, was asked in 1351 and 1352 to provide large quantities of fish for the Black Prince.<sup>16</sup> It may well have been the same Thomas who used a legacy from his father Hugh, a resident of Wiveton, to build the stone bridge at Wiveton and, on the same alignment, a wooden bridge over the second branch of the river.<sup>17</sup> After these public activities it is rather a surprise that in the poll tax of 1379 no Storms appear in any of the Glaven villages apart from Richard who paid the standard rate in Wiveton.<sup>18</sup>

The Toburs are also mentioned frequently, provided that references to Tower, Tover, Tobe, Tobur, Tuber and Tubber are all treated as members of the same family (in some medieval hands a 'w' and a double 'b' can look very similar). Thomas Tower is the earliest known owner of the building known as the Guildhall at the base of Mariners' Hill in Blakeney, although it is difficult to put a date on his ownership. This building (Fig. 4) has been run as a village charity from at least the mid 1500s and quite possibly from the time of the Dissolution.<sup>19</sup> In 1353 the chief constable of Holt Hundred was Thomas Tuber of Blakeney, probably the same Thomas who had given land to the friary the year before.<sup>20</sup>

The probability is that the Guildhall was built as a merchant's house during the 1300s, with the surviving undercroft serving as a warehouse. It is possible that it passed some time later to the friars, and maybe their Gild of St Anne met there. If so, they disposed of it before the Dissolution, and perhaps rather than selling it they passed it over to a group of village trustees, for which the evidence extends back into the reign of Henry VIII.<sup>21</sup>

### The Life of the Friary

Almost nothing is known about the life of Blakeney Friary in the two centuries and more between its foundation and its dissolution in 1538. This lack of information applies to many other friaries, contrasting with the documentary evidence available for many monasteries. Early Carmelites had strict rules preventing the ownership of property away from the friary but this was



**Fig. 4** *The surviving undercroft of the medieval 'Guildhall' in Blakeney*

gradually relaxed over time to allow friars to profit from rents and business opportunities. Friars would become known in their local community as they pursued their mendicant and commercial activities. In principle friaries agreed geographical boundaries within which their friars would be active.

Friaries were intended to be accessible both to visitors and local residents. Servants would help the friars with gardening and maintenance as well as with a range of domestic activities, including the purchase of provisions. People would also be able to come to the preaching area, whether in the preaching nave or outside, and to visit the cemetery where some lay people would be buried. Friaries might also be used for business meetings and many provided some teaching.

Elementary schools taught pupils to read, and for older pupils there were song schools and grammar schools. The former taught plainsong to those destined for the church, while grammar schools taught pupils Latin grammar and literature and how to converse in Latin. Mastery of Latin was an essential requirement for studying a range of subjects at universities. It is difficult to generalise about teaching provision in friaries, and much may have depended on individual masters.

The friary was both a residence and a workplace, and the buildings were designed for these activities. Their layout was similar to that of Benedictine monasteries.<sup>22</sup> At the heart of the friary was the church and cloister. On each side of the cloister lay most of the other buildings, with the chapter house on the eastern side nearest the church, together with the dormitory and a covered passage allowing friars access to

the church at night. The refectory was usually on the side opposite the church. A kitchen was also essential, as well as a house for the prior, a guest house, lavatory facilities and storage areas. A bakehouse and brew-house were normally present and, depending on the size of the friary, there may also have been an infirmary and a library. The cemetery was usually adjacent to the church on the opposite side to the cloister.

Water was an essential requirement and where a piped supply was provided the church would have been served first before any other buildings. If the natural drainage was towards the north then the cloister might be on that side of the church, rather than the more usual south side. In Norwich the cloister of Blackfriars was on the north side, on land sloping down to the river. Church construction would have needed a lime kiln close by, although for subsidiary buildings wood may have been used as an initial and temporary measure.<sup>23</sup>

It is from such generalisations that the life in Blakeney friary must be imagined. More specifically, it is known that the provincial chapter was held in Blakeney on several occasions: in 1389, 1410, 1435, 1462, 1494 and 1533, the last one to be held by the Carmelites. It was some 70 years before the first provincial chapter was held here but thereafter they were held at successive intervals of 21, 25, 27, 32 and 39 years.<sup>24</sup> At each chapter the Provincial presided, giving way in 1494 to the Vicar General of the Order, Laurence Bureau, Provincial of the Narbonne province.<sup>25</sup> These meetings would have been notable events in the local community with friars coming in from all areas of the



country, some by ship, no doubt bringing with them news otherwise hard to come by. Most would have been accommodated within the friary grounds, perhaps in tents brought with them, and all would need to be fed with fish and agricultural produce.

When Peter Terrasse, the Prior General of the Order, made his tour of inspection in 1504, his time in Norfolk was short. He arrived in London in September and thereafter was in Norwich on 10th October. His register then reads (in translation): *12th October we visited the convent of Snytterleye. 14th October we visited the convent at Lynn.* He apparently did not visit Burnham despite it being close to his direct route, nor is there reference to any business conducted in Blakeney. 'Visit' here means an official inspection, or 'visitation'. When Burreau was here in 1494 he was also making a visitation of the province.

In November 1504 the register makes reference to Robert Love who was to hold the office of Provincial from 1505 to 1513. According to John Bale, he was '*eloquent and learned, upright in his actions, but altogether harsh and arrogant*'. He is also known to have joined the Carmelite order at Blakeney, perhaps at a young age. John Bale himself, one of the most prominent of the Carmelites, was born in 1495, joined the Carmelite Order in Norwich at the age of 12 and was the prior at Ipswich at the Dissolution, so he may well have paid a visit to Blakeney in his 30 years as a Carmelite friar.

Perhaps the best known of all the English Carmelites is John Baconthorpe. He was born in Baconsthorpe in c. 1290 and '*probably at a young age*' came to the friary at Blakeney.<sup>26</sup> If it is true that he joined the Order here he would have been one of the very first scholars on what would have been a new building site. It seems more likely that he joined the order at Burnham Norton and then transferred to Blakeney. He was a student in Oxford by 1312, completed his studies in Paris, and was Provincial of the English province for five years from 1327. His written works and debates with leading contemporaries led him to be viewed long after his death as the principal authority on Carmelite theology.

Other friars associated with Blakeney are mentioned in records from various parts of the country. Those known to have joined the Order at Blakeney include Ralph Ashley who joined between 1342 and 1348, John Tompson who died there in 1382, and Martin Sculthorpe who joined before 1403 and may have been buried there. William Blakeney joined about 1442, became prior of Cambridge in 1500, vacated that post before 1503, and returned to Blakeney where he died and was buried.

At Stow in Lincolnshire, in May 1353, seven friars were listed as coming from Blakeney when they were ordained as deacons or priests: William Beaufeu, Ralph Berham, William Brigge, John Fransham, Simon Moulton, Robert Turneston and John Wistowe. Some may have joined the Order elsewhere, as perhaps did Thomas Sylvester but he was at Blakeney when he requested permission to transfer to a Carthusian monastery and live as an anchorite. In 1536 Robert Cockthorpe was said to be from Blakeney friary, and Thomas Fraunceys, who was deprived of his curacy at Hickling in 1555, was probably a former friar from Blakeney.<sup>27</sup>

It is difficult to find the names of other Blakeney friars from local records. In 1521 Thomas Hecker of Cley bequeathed blankets and sheets to his son 'friar Thomas'. In 1528 William Dalle left seven marks (£4 13s 6d)

to Thomas Hecker the friar and three years later Cecily Hutton of Blakeney left him 10s for a trental (a requiem mass said on 30 successive days).<sup>28</sup> But both testators said that Thomas was a Walsingham friar and therefore he must have been a Franciscan. The last prior at Blakeney was Thomas Houghton; Blomefield records that in 1537 he leased parts of the friary to Christopher and James Calthorpe and their respective wives.

Among the Paston letters is one written in 1450 in which the writer tells John Paston, then in London, that '*my lord of Wurcestre lithe at Blakney and kepith housold there in the Frieri*'. Other letters from the 1440s tell of John Hauteyn (also known as John Sharrington) who claimed ownership of Oxnead manor after Judge William Paston had bought it. Hauteyn was a Carmelite friar frequently at odds with his Order, one episode being confinement in the friary in Norwich after running away. Having become a priest he went to Blakeney where his uncle, John Aldeburgh, was prior. He spent four years there becoming collector of alms and guest-master before absconding again, this time in stolen lay clothes and taking with him a book which Aldeburgh had to redeem for £3. As a friar, he should not have aspired to property ownership but in spite of renouncing the Order, after long legal proceedings, he was unsuccessful in his suit.<sup>29</sup>

It is not known how many friars lived in Blakeney at any one time. Friars moved between houses so it is difficult to make such estimates but for friaries in the first half of the 1300s the average number was probably between 20 and 30. Blakeney was probably smaller than the many friaries in urban locations and so numbers between 10 and 20 might well have been the norm until the probable decline in latter years. Many of them will now lie in the cemetery adjacent to their church.

## 4 The Friary: Decline And Fall

### The Dissolution of the Friaries

The Act of Supremacy in 1534 by which Henry VIII became the head of the Church of England was quickly enforced. A wide range of people were compelled to take an oath of obedience by which they acknowledged the king as the supreme head of the Church and that the bishop of Rome (the Pope) had no more authority than any other bishop.<sup>30</sup> During 1534 the prior of Langley Priory, Richard Ingworth, visited friaries in eastern counties to secure their acceptance of the king's authority. In December 1537 he was made Suffragan Bishop of Dover and commissioned to visit all friaries in England, putting their goods into safe custody and taking inventories of them in preparation for suppression. He had no authority to award pensions but subsequently some friars were licensed to become secular priests, while others were given a cash payment and went out to join the ranks of 'sturdy beggars'.

At this time some 200 friaries remained but they were occupied by many fewer friars than had been living there during the 1300s. In some only the prior was resident and assets, such as chalices, vestments and timber, had already been sold. Many buildings were in a poor state of repair, or had been leased out together with their gardens. While some secular tenants lived in friary buildings, some friars lived off-site in lodgings, earning a living as best they could. By this time most friaries were not receiving much support from lo-

### **The Dissolution of the Monasteries**

*The Act of Supremacy in 1534 made Henry VIII the head of the Church of England and led to the diversion of clergy taxes from the Pope to the English Crown. In January 1535 Thomas Cromwell appointed commissioners to conduct an inventory of the incomes of ecclesiastical establishments in England and Wales as a guide to their taxable value. They were to complete their work by the end of May. This 'visitation' was also intended to enforce Henry's supremacy and to bring erring monasteries back to their guiding principles. The resulting 'Valor Ecclesiasticus' was completed during the summer of that year and the scale of the wealth discovered encouraged Henry to transfer much of that wealth to his own depleted coffers.*

*The Suppression of Religious Houses Act passed in February 1536 dissolved all monasteries with a declared income of less than £200 per annum. Binham Priory was assessed at £140 5s 4d, but as a cell of the Benedictine priory of St Albans escaped an early dissolution, although it was noticed that it had authorised leases under its own seal. For comparison, Blakeney church had a net income of £26 13s 4d, mostly from tithes. In many other parishes tithe income had been appropriated by monasteries and formed a significant element of their income. Parish churches were never to be a target of dissolution measures.*

*During 1536 the houses identified for suppression were visited again in order to list their assets and valuables. Some houses gave them up while others paid a heavy fine to retain them. Monks could either transfer to a larger house or take a cash gratuity without pension. Meanwhile the Court of Augmentations was set up to manage the whole process. It may not have been Henry's original intention, but during 1537 it became increasingly clear that total abolition and not reform was the aim. In 1538 Thomas Cromwell sent out letters warning against asset stripping or hiding valuables, and putting the remaining monasteries under heavy pressure to surrender. Another round of visits soon followed to supervise transfers to the Court, to arrange for monks to have pensions, to confirm lay tenancies on monastic properties, and even to award some servants a year's wage. During 1539 the remaining houses were forced to surrender and the dissolution of the monasteries was essentially complete, with their titles invested in the Crown, and instructions given to 'ruin' but not necessarily demolish their buildings.*

cal people: monasteries lived off their own income but friaries depended on donations, increasingly seen as depleting the resources of lay families.

The dissolution of the friaries followed a parallel course to the dissolution of the monasteries, but it was an easier one for the Crown because friaries owned no property elsewhere and had no established sources of income. Suppression was essentially complete by the end of 1538. Some friary lodgings and gatehouses were

to be occupied by new gentry owners, but churches were nearly always ransacked for their building materials.

The exception was in Norwich where the City council took the unusual, complicated and expensive step of acquiring the Dominican friary (Blackfriars) for civic use. There had been little support from citizens in later years and by the time the City took ownership the buildings were seriously dilapidated. Weeds sprouted on heaps of refuse and rubble lay everywhere. For a short while a school was housed there, but not before cartloads of 'muck and rubbish' had been taken out.<sup>31</sup>

The local monasteries and friaries were not entirely without support. In north Norfolk in 1537 a number of local men were implicated in the 'Walsingham Conspiracy'.<sup>32</sup> Their activities never reached beyond seditious complaints but their intention to do more was discovered and resulted in 25 of them being imprisoned in Norwich Castle. They were found guilty of treason and a dozen were executed, others were either sentenced to life imprisonment or pardoned. Two of those said to be implicated were friars from Burnham; one is not identified in the records while the other, William Gibson, was one of those imprisoned.

### **The Last Years of the Friary**

The friars at Blakeney would have grown much of their own food and medicinal requirements but for other expenses they were dependent on the generosity of their patrons and local people. Some evidence can be seen in bequests made to them in wills. In Blakeney and the adjacent villages of Morston, Cley and Wiveton some 310 wills are recorded for the period 1370 to 1536 of which a quarter are from the first 100 years and three-quarters (234) from the years between 1470 and 1537. Of these latter wills 70 have been looked at, most of them dating from the last 20 years before the Dissolution. These wills do not form a structured sample and cannot be used to see if there was any change in attitude towards the friary in the decades leading up to the Dissolution.<sup>33</sup>

Only 16 of the 70 wills seen (23%) made a bequest to the friary, which might suggest that the friars were not receiving much popular support in their last years. What is noticeable is that the wealthier the testator the more likely it is that a bequest to the friary will be made. It is a standard feature of wills that money is left to the 'high altar' of the local church for 'tithes forgotten'. Further bequests are then often made to some or all the gilds in the church and to the lights maintained there. Additional bequests from richer people usually start with donations towards the repair or maintenance of the testator's church, and after that towards good causes elsewhere, principally churches and friaries.

The will made by John Calthorpe (1503), who asked to be buried in the friary church, does not leave (Fig. 5) bequests to local ecclesiastical bodies in the usual fashion. It is possible to divide the 69 other wills seen into 3 groups: those which leave at least 6s 8d to the 'high altar' (18), others which leave less than that but more than 1s (23), and the remainder leaving 1s or less (28). In the latter group only two leave a bequest to the friary even though almost all leave money to the gilds in the church and to maintaining the lights there. In the middle group of wills, four leave a bequest to the friary despite leaving more to their local church than the poorer group. In the richer group ten





**Fig. 5 The brass in Blakeney Church to John Calthorpe and his wife Alice, 1503**

left money to the friary, although all these gave significantly more to their church than to the friars.

Bequests from richer people were also spread over a larger number of beneficiaries. John Moye (1496), John Symondes (1509), John Grenewey (1525) and Thomas Holting (1528) all left money to three or more churches in addition to their own. They were also generous towards other friaries: John Grenewey left money for 12 other friaries in the county, Agnes Symondes (1512) to nine, and John Symondes and John Symons (1502) to six. Of all 16 testators leaving money to the Blakeney friary, eight also left money to the Greyfriars at Walsingham and five to the Whitefriars at Burnham Norton. The most generous benefactor in these wills was Thomas Holting, leaving £3 to Blakeney friary, while four others gave £1 each.

Instead of outright gifts, or sometimes in addition, some testators left money for a friar to sing a trental in the testator's church, or else in the friary. In all the wills seen there was a standard rate of 10s for this service, no matter what the circumstances of the testator. Three of the richer group paid up, with James Steele (1519) wanting a trental in Burnham friary as well as in Blakeney. In the middle group five wills make provision for trentals with a sixth, William Dalle (1528) offering seven marks (£4 13s 4d) to both Blakeney and Walsingham for a friar to 'sing for his soul' for a whole year. In the poorer group of testators only Cecily Hutton (1531) asked for a trental. In total, the 16 wills making bequests, together with the six additional wills funding

trentals, provided £18 17s 4d, half as gifts and half for services to be rendered. Perhaps this suggests that the testators' concern was as much for their personal salvation in the catholic faith as for maintaining the friary itself, although the very small sample illustrates rather than justifies such comments.

Some wills from the nearby villages of Binham and Stiffkey have also been seen. Of eight from Binham leaving bequests to Blakeney friary (and also to Walsingham) four left small sums of money, up to 3s 4d, while the other four bequeathed a coombe of barley (a coombe being four bushels). The same pattern was true in Stiffkey where four wills gave either similar amounts of money or else a coombe of wheat. In contrast, none of the wills from Blakeney or the three parishes adjacent mention grain, although John Grenewey left two fotheres of lead to Blakeney friary. A fother weighed about 1 cwt and might have covered an area of some 30 square yards.

Friaries could also benefit from people with local connections who had made their fortunes elsewhere. In 1394 John Blakeney, a prominent fishmonger in London, left money to churches in north Norfolk and also £6 13s 4d to Blakeney friary and 6s 8d to the prior. More modest sums were left by people in north Norfolk throughout the life of the friary, including Thomas Heydon of Salthouse 2s 6d in 1370, William Snetterton of Erpingham 6s 8d in 1445, and John Perott of Holt 3s 4d in 1498. Such bequests from further afield, together with unrecorded gifts made during the lifetime of testa-



tors, emphasise that local wills can only illustrate one aspect of friary income, not measure its importance.

In his will of 1503 John Calthorpe is described as John Calthropp of Cockthorpe, 'squyer'. He required his 'synfull body to be beryed in the whyte ffryres of Snetyrl that is to to sey in the myddys of the channsell'. This has caused much comment over the years with many people assuming that the presence of a brass to his memory in Blakeney church (Fig. 5) must mean that the friars either built the parish church or used it in the absence of their own. This is highly unlikely for reasons set out elsewhere, and the inference is that Calthorpe's brass, and perhaps his coffin, were removed from the friary to the parish church at the time of the Dissolution just 35 years later.<sup>34</sup> The brass describes him as one of the 'founders' of the friary. The date on it is 1503, not 1508 as appears in various texts: it is inscribed in the form 'one thousand, five hundreds, three'.

Henry Sheppard's will (1523) bequeathed his body 'to be buried in the chirchyard of our Lady called Wyght ffryres in Snyterley befor the auter of Seynt Anne'. Perhaps he was, and perhaps he too was moved to the parish church as there is an undated brass there to Henry and Katherine Scheppard. If placed there at his burial in the parish church one might expect it to record the date, but if prepared after the Dissolution the date might not have been remembered – no children are mentioned in his will. Nor does he mention the name of his wife, only that he gives 6s 8d for the reparation of the parish church after her burial there.

The altar of St Anne was presumably inside the church as the friary was host to a gild of St Anne. Only two of the wills seen make a bequest to the gild: James Steele left 2s, and Thomas Holting left 20s in addition to £2 towards the repair of the friary. Of all the wills seen, the last to be made was by the moderately wealthy John Barker in February 1537. The future of the gilds in Blakeney church must then have been uncertain for he left money to two of them 'so they continue' but if they did not then the legacy was to go elsewhere. His uncertainty did not extend to the friaries, or else he assumed they would survive for the last few months of his life. He left 12d to the friars in Walsingham and 20s to the Blakeney friars to sing one trental in Blakeney church and another 'at their place'. His will demonstrates that the friary was still a going concern in 1537 even if there were few friars still there.

Some of those making wills in the early 1500s are named in the Military Survey of 1522 when all residents were assessed for their wealth before an intended taxation.<sup>35</sup> At that time the four richest men in the three Glaven parishes were John King & John Dey, who left nothing to the friary because they died after the Dissolution, and Thomas Holting and John Grenewey whose wills (of those seen) were the most generous towards the friary. Those known to have given more had all died before the 1522 survey.

## The End

The friary was dissolved towards the end of 1538. The first published notice of the event comes in an entry in the Letters and Papers of Henry VIII recording reasons why some houses had not been sold nor 'defasede' or 'rasede'. The Carmelite friary at Burnham Norton remained as it had been left by the Visitor 'on account of a letter written by Mr Southwell to William Buttes his deputy ordering him not to meddle as Sir Richard Gresham had the preferment of the said house at the

king's hand'. The friary at Blakeney had been left untouched for the same reason.<sup>36</sup>

The same source records that on 6th February 1542 William Rede, a mercer (cloth merchant) of London, and his wife Anne were granted the site and house of the friary buildings, with the tenements lately leased to Christopher Calthorpe and his wife Eleanor, and the other closes in Blakeney and Wiveton which belonged to the friary.<sup>37</sup> Shortly afterwards, in March, William was granted licence to sell the friary and its land to the king's economic advisor, Sir Richard Gresham, who had been born in Holt and was also a prominent mercer in London.<sup>38</sup> The Dissolution enabled him to make a substantial amount of money from speculating in monastic property through asset stripping and selling at a profit. The Augmentation accounts record in 1543 that he had acquired the bells from both Blakeney and Burnham friaries.<sup>39</sup>

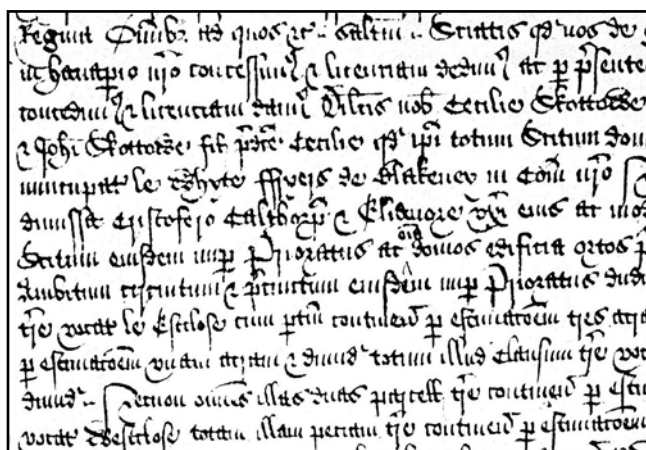
A request by Richard Gresham to the Court of Augmentations makes reference to the deed dated 5th July 1542 by which he received the friary from William Rede. He then relates that on 1st May 1533 Christopher Calthorpe had taken a lease of a close called the West Close, containing 1½ acres, and also another parcel of land at the friary containing 1 acre.<sup>40</sup>

Portable valuables in the form of jewels and plate had already been passed to the Treasurer of Augmentations. From Blakeney came 100 oz of gilt and 54 oz of white (ungilded) silver with two paxes of ivory. The pax was an object, sometimes very elaborate, which included a flat surface to receive the kiss of peace, a part of the Catholic Mass. For comparison, the friary at Burnham yielded 3 oz of gilt and 58 oz of white, together with a 'nutt garnished with silver'.<sup>41</sup>

Blomefield records these transfers but adds to the house and its closes 'the stallage, shops, cellars, fair, mercate and customs'. In his influential work 'Index Monasticon' Richard Taylor repeats these additions to the friary and so do other authors, including Bryant in his volumes on Norfolk churches. More recently Derick Mellor, in one of his local booklets, notes that the friary lands came with rents from the trading stalls, market and fair.<sup>42</sup>

Blomefield's list of trading activities would have given the friars a significant income to supplement alms received from their mendicant activities. Which manorial lords or other landowners gave up these rights and incomes to the friary and where is the evidence? The answer is that there is no such evidence, for these assets were in Beccles, not in Blakeney. The Benedictine abbey at Bury St Edmunds was one of the richest in the country and came to own much of western Suffolk, including the manor of Beccles. At the Dissolution these holdings were dispersed. William Rede, citizen and mercer of London, paid £425 14s 10d for the lordship of Beccles, including all those income sources listed by Blomefield and many other assets as well.

A large parchment deed, dated 6th February 1542, records this transfer from Henry VIII to William Rede and his wife Anne, and is headed by an illustration of the king handing the deed to the new owners (Fig. 6). Only one third of the way down the document is there reference to a second purchase by William and Anne: for £30 2s 6d they obtained 'scitum dom sive nuper prioratus dudum fratrum carmelitar vulgarit nuncupat lez White ffryers de Blakeney' (Fig. 7). The site of the former Carmelite friary at Blakeney came with sitting tenants Christopher and Eleanor Calthorpe, one of the two par-



**Fig. 7 (above) Part of the deed conveying the friary from Scottowe to Barker, 1563**

**Fig. 6 (left) Part of the deed conveying the friary from the king to Rede, 1542**

ties who had taken a lease of the buildings in 1537. The document then lists each parcel of land in the transfer, a total of 17 acres, adding in woodland and rents received but without reference to any income sources elsewhere. The published calendar of Henry VIII's Letters and Papers summarises the transaction as 'the tenements lately leased to Christopher Calthorpe and Eleanor his wife within the said site, and diverse closes in Blakeney and Wiveton which belonged to the priory'.

Only two years later, sometime in 1544, the same calendar records that Richard Gresham sold the site of the friary and its lands to Peter Scottowe and his wife Cecilia.<sup>43</sup> After Peter died leaving his wife in possession of the friary she and her son John Scottowe sold it in 1563 to Thomas Barker, shipmaster of Blakeney.<sup>44</sup> Christopher and Eleanor Calthorpe were still named as the tenants, although deeds were not always updated fully and their heirs would have been in possession by then.

Peter Scottowe referred to the friary in his will dated September 1562. He left to his wife all the land she had brought as a widow to the marriage, and to his son John he left all the messuages, lands and tenements in Blakeney, Wiveton, Glandford and Letheringsett, once known as the Whitefriars, which he had bought from Richard Gresham. Cicely (various spellings are used) was to surrender her life interest in the property to John. He promptly sold it to Thomas Barker who was a witness to Peter's will and had previously sold him land. Despite calling himself a yeoman rather than a shipmaster, it is probably the same Thomas whose will, made in 1582, bequeathed to his many children a substantial amount of property, but there is no reference to the former friary, nor any indication of where he was living at the time.

Blomefield gives some brief details of the friary buildings in his note recording Thomas Houghton's lease in 1537 to Christopher Calthorpe and his wife, and to James Calthorpe and his wife Elizabeth. The leased building is described as a part of the mansion house known as Dr Jeffrey Norwich's lodging, and his description of its location is set out later in this article. Calthorpe's lease was for 60 years at 13s 4d per annum.<sup>45</sup>

Some further notes by Blomefield are useful but leave room for interpretation. He says that in 1543 Gresham's ownership amounted to 11 acres 'within the walls of the scite', part of it in Calthorpe's tenure. Other pieces of land in Blakeney, Wiveton, Glandford and Letheringsett 'late belonging to the friars house' totalled 13 acres. The 'friars house' at this time was roofed with lead and tile, the remaining houses 'in the yard' with thatch.

It is not clear how Blomefield's 11 and 13 acres relate to the 17 acres in the actual deeds, although the latter figure does not include the area of the buildings. The reference to Glandford and Letheringsett (echoed in the wording of Peter Scottowe's subsequent will) might suggest that some fields unconnected with the friary at the time of its dissolution had been added in to the sequence of sales. Whatever the answer to that, the bigger discrepancy is with the total of c. 65 acres which appears occasionally in print. Compared with urban friaries this is a very large figure, although Burnham Norton had 68 acres at the Dissolution. Like the supposed extra income sources, this figure is an error: it can be traced to a misreading of the 4½ acres given to the friary in 1352 as 42 acres.

### **And Thereafter**

Blomefield records that the friary lands were in the possession of Silvester Oldman in 1603 who 'proposed selling them to J Hobarte, lord of Holt'. But in a further reference he says that the premises passed from Oldman to Chadwick on 1st September 1604. The will of Silvester Oldman, 'late of Blakeney', dated 20th April 1604 with probate on the 28th, is not particularly helpful. It is a short nuncupative will recording only that he had left to his wife Elizabeth all his 'goodes rights



credits chattels and debts', a list which appears to exclude any land.

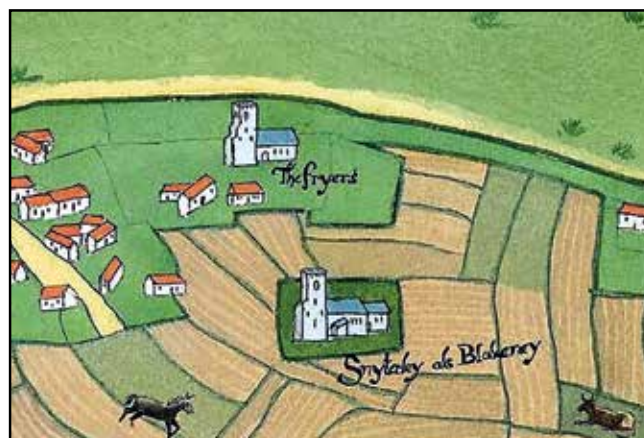
It is not clear how the property was then defined but it must have included what was left of the friary buildings, and the probability is that it still included a house suitable for a 'gentleman'. Even so, if the building was the original one from the 1300s it is likely to have been in poor repair nearly 300 years later. It is no surprise, then, that the principal building on the site today, incorporating a few fragments of earlier walling, also carries a plaque with the date 1667 (Fig. 8). Assuming this is genuine, it should indicate a major rebuilding, probably the one producing the core of the present house.

This building appears on a number of maps produced since the time of the Dissolution. In 1586 John Darby prepared a map showing, for a court case, the main features of Blakeney harbour and he also included a portrayal of the Glaven villages.<sup>46</sup> In Blakeney he shows on the site of the friary a church drawn in the same manner as the village churches in that it has a western tower and a nave, with no indication of it being a ruin (Fig. 9). The significant difference is that it has no separate chancel and no additions such as an aisle or a porch. Close by are three buildings drawn in the same style as other buildings in the village, implying that the two larger ones are houses. The other is the smallest on the map, assuming the nineteenth-century copies and the modern reproduction reflect the original drawing, so it might represent a different use. Darby's portrayal of the friary will not be an accurate drawing but it is consistent with a residential building on the site only four years after Thomas Barker had left it to one of his sons.

A century later Greenville Collins shows the friary church still standing, surrounded by a cluster of buildings – there is no risk of misinterpretation as he labels it the 'Priorey' (Fig. 10).<sup>47</sup> His chart published in 1693 is designed to help navigation at sea and his depiction of features on land are there mainly to further that aim. Blakeney church, prominent and standing alone on Howe Hill, is therefore drawn as a large building with a western tower and an indication of the second, smaller, tower. The friary church, on the other hand, is much smaller and has an eastern tower. This may once have been a central tower, a common feature of friaries, but the chart cannot be taken as evidence that the friars' chancel had been demolished because Collins appears to show an eastern tower for Cley church as well – which it does not have.

Although Collins' coastal chart shows a church on the friary site, his more detailed chart of Blakeney harbour, showing also the villages of Blakeney and Cley, does not: there is only a small building drawn in exactly the same form as the buildings lining Blakeney High Street.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the Frere manuscripts contain a comment, written perhaps in the later 1600s, that Blakeney had a 'monastery', adding that *'the steeple of the church remains for a land mark still'*.<sup>49</sup> This comment appears to confirm that the tower, often termed a 'steeple', was still there when Collins was engaged on his survey of the whole coast of Britain.

On a large-scale map of Blakeney parish produced by William and Corba Crane-field in 1769 the parish church is accurately drawn but there is no suggestion of anything on the friary site other than a single residential building, to judge by the way other property is shown in the village (Fig. 11).<sup>50</sup> Close by is a windmill which still stands, one of the few brick tower mills in



**Fig. 8 (upper)** The date plaque on friary farmhouse, 1667

**Fig. 9 (lower)** Detail from the map of Blakeney Haven by John Darby, 1586

**Fig. 10 (opposite upper)** Detail from a chart by Greenville Collins, 1693

**Fig. 11 (opposite lower)** Detail from the Crane-field map showing land owned by Narborough 1769

Norfolk known to date from the 18th century. In 1769, the same year as the Crane-field map, the mill was advertised to let by Francis Narborough and then in 1774 he put it up for sale as part of a property containing a farm house, outhouses with adjacent enclosures, and several pieces of field land containing in total 54 acres. Enquiries were to be addressed to Mr Francis Narborough at Wiveton, which seems to suggest that he was not then living in the property.<sup>51</sup>

The Crane-field map shows every field in the parish, together with its owner and acreage, and comparison with later maps shows that it is essentially accurate. The fields around the friary house and the windmill are labelled 'Narborough', and measure 21¼ acres. Their depiction as closes contrasts with the strip farming in





nearby areas, one of those strips (¾ of an acre) also being in Narborough's ownership. Some of the close boundaries might derive from the friary, but even if this is not the case it is still possible that the outer boundary of Narborough's land might coincide, at least in part, with that of the friary.

In Narborough's ownership in 1769 were more fields south of the parish church, and one property in the High Street. Just a few months later, as recorded in the 1770 census of Blakeney, Francis and Anne were the only adults with that surname in the village.<sup>52</sup> Whether they had been living in the farmhouse or in the High Street they appear to have moved out by the time of the sale in 1774.

The Narborough family had been present in Blak-

eney for some time before that. In August 1760 a manorial court recorded the death of Thomas Narborough and in 1763 Francis took over his land, although that was only a small piece on Blakeney Downs that Philip Narborough had acquired in 1714 (very little land was then subject to manorial custom). Robert, a churchwarden in 1672, was assessed on four hearths in the hearth taxes of 1664 and 1666 but the initials on the 1667 plaque (T R I) are not his, nor do they tally with any hearth tax name in Blakeney or adjacent villages.

The property was for sale again in 1777, and yet again in 1806 with William Marsh in occupation, when it had a farm house and windmill but only 27 acres of land. William was still there when the farm and mill were put up for auction in 1812. By 1820 the friary

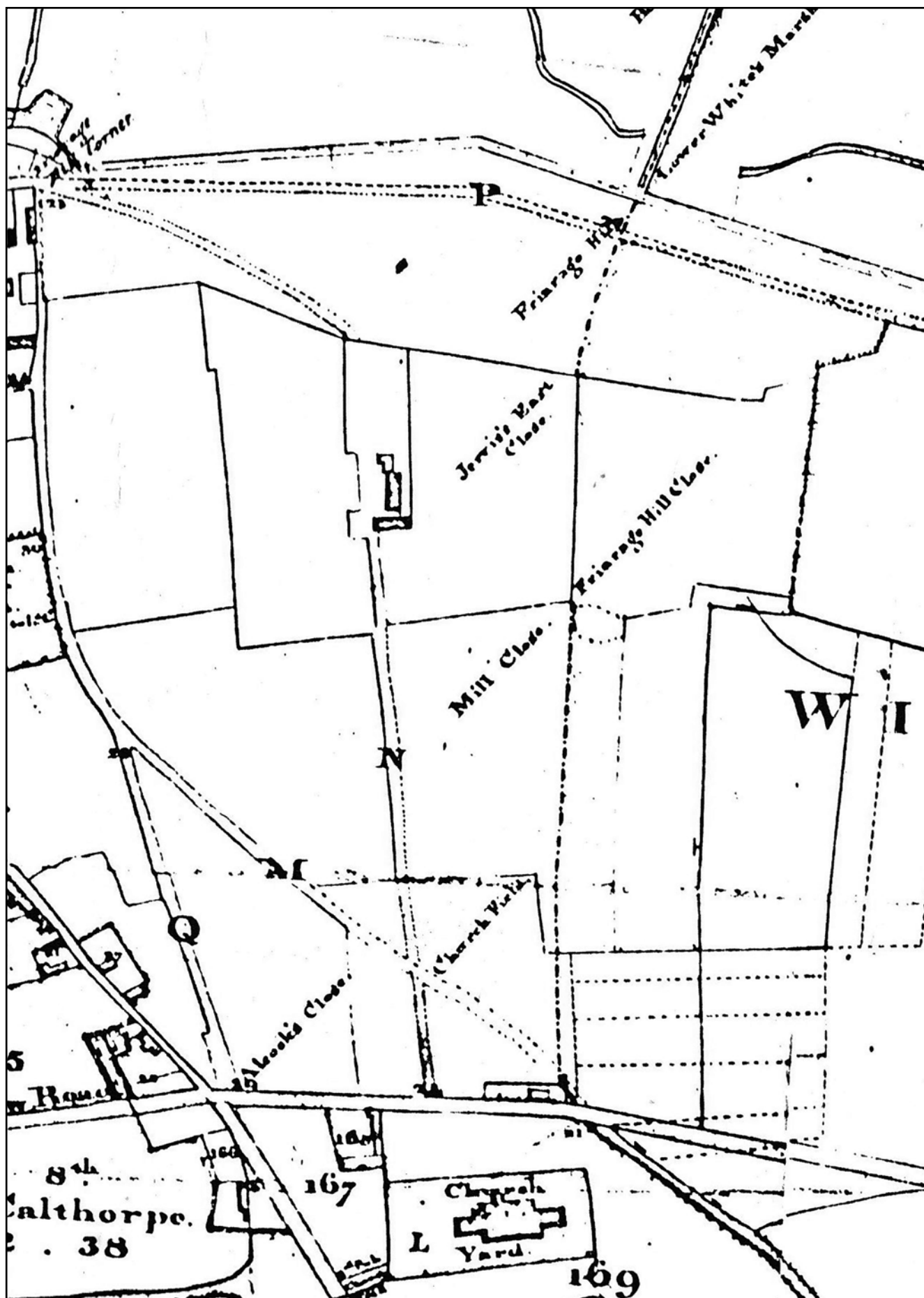
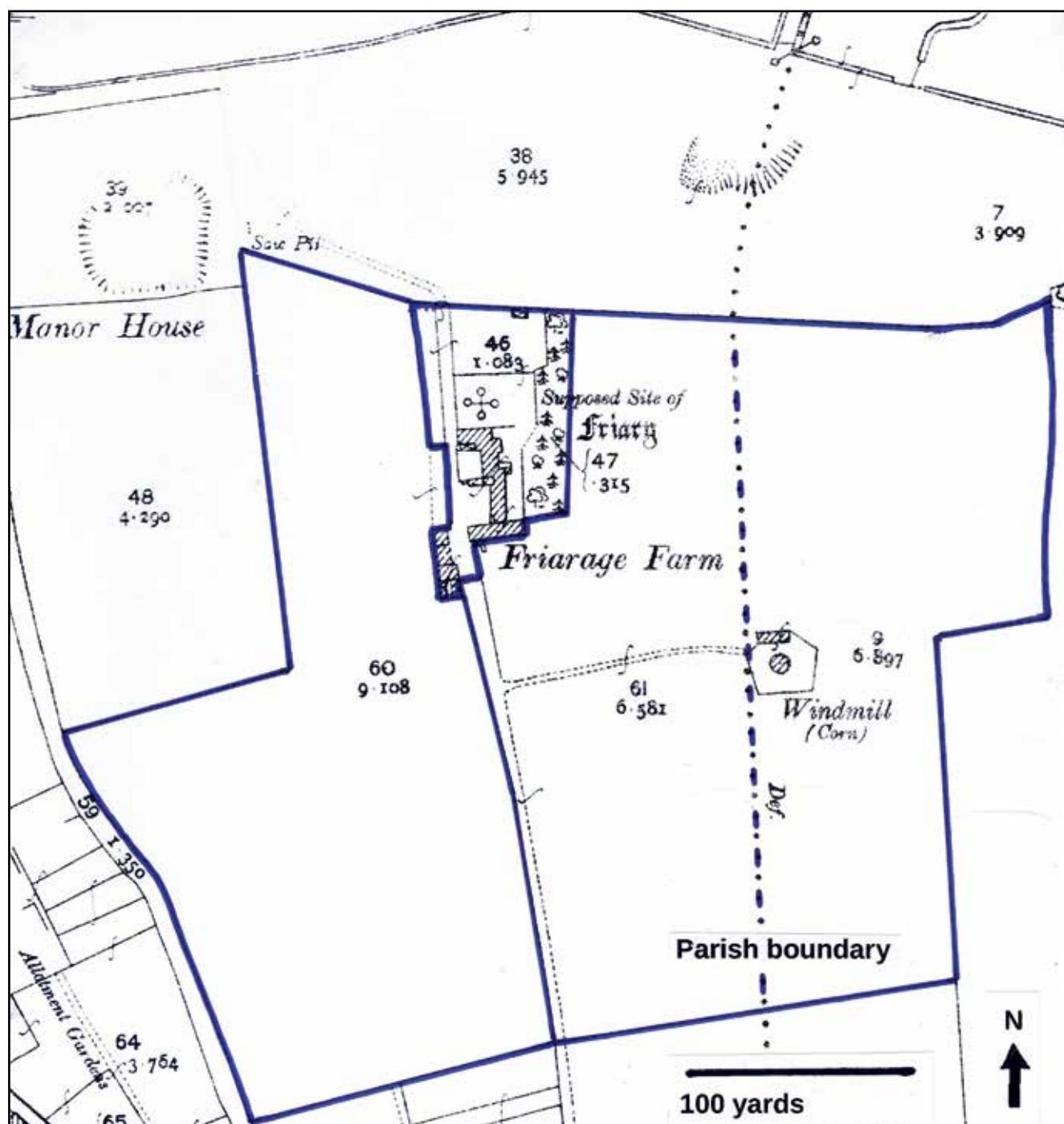


Fig. 12 Detail from the Enclosure map, 1824





**Fig. 13 Part of Lot 12 in the Calthorpe sale, 1911**

farm was in the ownership of Lord Calthorpe. The enclosure award of 1824 refers to the 'messuage or farmhouse called the Friary now or late in the occupation of John Jarvis'.

The Enclosure map retains Narborough's field boundaries shown on the 1769 map and adds in a boundary very close to the friary farmhouse, separating that from 'Jarvis's East Close' (Fig. 12). It also shows the parish boundary between Blakeney and Wiveton. From a point on the north wall it follows a field boundary to the mill and continues in the same straight line towards the NE corner of the church. Where this line meets the old course of 'Back Lane' it turns to follow this track towards the SE. A north-south field boundary on the 1769 map becomes on the Enclosure map an access way from the new Cley Road to the farmhouse.<sup>53</sup>

In 1827 Thomas Drosier, miller and dealer, was

made bankrupt, and soon afterwards John Starling, merchant and ship owner, became the miller. The 1841 census shows that John Starling was living at 'The Friarage' and by 1851 a younger John was there as a 'small farmer and merchant'. In 1871 William Starling at 'Mill House' is described as a coal merchant but the same William is listed at 'The Friarage' in 1881 as a farmer, now with 50 acres.

In July 1911 the part of the Calthorpe estate in the vicinity of Blakeney went to auction but Lot 12 had already been sold to the tenant, Mr Bodham Starling.<sup>54</sup> That property was the 'Friarage Farm and Windmill', some 56 acres in extent. A large part consisted of fresh marshes and the Friary Hills; the remaining area (30 acres) was mostly arable land with the farmhouse and windmill. Fig. 13 shows that part which is almost coincident with Narborough's land (24 acres).



The Starlings were still farming there in the 1920s, and the 1946 aerial photographs show fields all around the farm buildings. Later still the farm became a caravan site in the ownership of Mrs Vera Williams. She died in 1977 leaving the property to her husband Capt. Ronald Williams and after his death in 1983 the farm, mill and caravan site passed to the National Trust.

## 5 The Present Site

### The Friary Grounds

The 1586 map (Fig. 9 p.37) shows the location of the friary and may seem to give an indication of its boundaries, but Darby's primary intention was to map the harbour, not the layout of the four villages which had access to it. The friary is shown as part of the village with what appears to be an extension out into a pattern of furlongs, creating an angular boundary not seen elsewhere on the map. The significance of this, if any, is unclear. The 1769 map of the parish (Fig. 11) shows a mixture of small fields, or closes, and the remnants of the strip farming that would have been prevalent in medieval times. Property boundaries often have a long life. It cannot be demonstrated that the friary's boundaries are embedded in Narborough's ownership in 1769 but his six fields then correspond almost exactly with the three fields sold in 1911 as part of Lot 12 containing the farmhouse and windmill. These fields comprise 24 acres but if the expansion of one field to the east of the windmill is discounted the resulting area of about 22½ acres is similar to Cranefield's figure of 21¼ acres for Narborough's land.

The deeds transferring ownership from Rede to Gresham, from Gresham to Scottowe, and from Scottowe to Barker all list the specific pieces of land which comprised the friary ownership at the Dissolution, other than those with the actual buildings. Between 1542 and 1563 there is no change in their name, area and location, nor in the order of listing, all of which can be summarised as:

3 acres	A	East Close
1 ½ acres	B	West Close
1 ½ acres	C	Kylle or Kell Close
2 acres	D	two parcels of land at the SW corner of West Close
1 acre	E	one piece of land adjacent to the Faldegate
1 acre	F	two half-acre pieces to the east of the Faldegate leading to Wiveton
1 acre	G	a furlong on the east side of East Close
1 acre	H	Tannes Acre on the same furlong
1 acre	J	two half-acres in the same furlong leading to Wiveton
2 ½ acres	K	three parcels of land in three separate pieces
1 ½ acres	L	meadow

The 1542 deed refers to rents and annual profits from these holdings, but the buildings are not mentioned so their unknown area is additional to the total of 17 acres. A working assumption is that the Faldegate is the forerunner of Back Lane leading up from the quay to the church and on to Wiveton. Kylle or Kell Close can be taken as Kiln Close because a kiln to make lime mortar would have been needed for the con-

struction of the friary buildings, and so may have been located close by. Some of the land might have been used as pasture for grazing animals, but the use of 'meadow' suggests land producing a hay crop. The location of the various pieces of land in 'Blakeney and Wiveton', as sometimes described, does not imply that the area was fragmented as the boundary between the parishes passes now, and no doubt did so then, very close to the friary buildings. There is no reference to any land in Glandford or Letheringsett which in Peter Scottowe's will (1562) had been included in his 'Whitefriars' holding. The number and size of the pieces of land listed in the deeds cannot be equated with the various donations made to the friary in the 1300s, which may imply some reorganisation during the life of the friary.

The brief descriptions of the 16 pieces of land are not sufficiently detailed to allow even a tentative map to be drawn. Nevertheless, the descriptions of some pieces suggest how all of them might be accommodated within the boundaries of the land owned by Narborough and later by Calthorpe. These boundaries are the result of an inclosure process that extinguished the pattern of small medieval strips and closes that would have been in use when the original donations were made. Even so, some old boundaries may still be present within later ones.

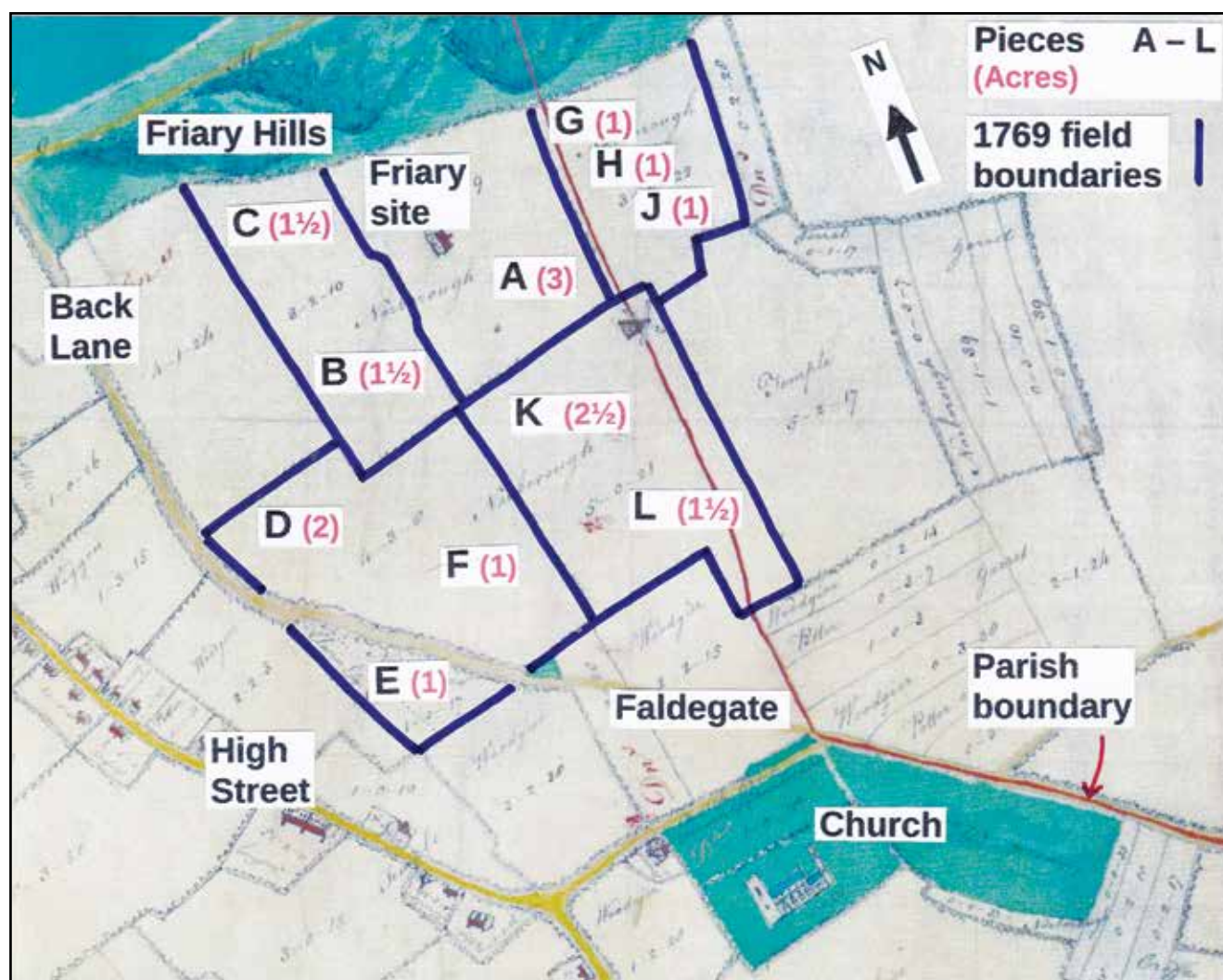
On Fig. 14 the 11 letters (above) denote the 16 pieces of land, and their acreages are also given. The first three pieces (A, B and C) could lie together in one block and there is evidence that the East and West closes were adjacent to the friary buildings. These three pieces are the only ones described as 'closes' suggesting that they were actually enclosed in some way, perhaps in contrast to the others.

The next sequence (D, E and F) can be located together by their descriptions, but it may just be coincidence that the five separate pieces comprise an area of four acres, the size of two of the original gifts. Area G can also be located by its description 'on the east side of East close'. The pieces H and J 'in the same furlong' ought to be close by but the description of the furlong as 'leading to Wiveton' is difficult to accommodate and so their suggested location may be wrong.

The two remaining pieces (K and L), also four acres in total, would then lie together in Narborough's remaining field, although K consists of three separate pieces so they may not have been contiguous. This is a reminder that the 16 pieces described in the deeds derive from the furlongs and strips of a medieval field system still residually present at the time of the Dissolution. Few of their boundaries can have been carried forward into the large regular fields owned by Narborough over 200 years later, and their total area of 17 acres (plus, say, 2 for the buildings) falls short of Narborough's 21¼ acres. The implication is that they may have had a more fragmented distribution than is suggested by Fig. 14 and it cannot be demonstrated that Narborough's land coincided with that of the friary.

An indication of how the friary buildings were arranged is given by Blomefield. He says of the building leased to the Calthorpes in 1537 that it was a part of the mansion house 'sometime called Dr Jeffrey Norwich's lodging'. Blomefield is referring to Geoffrey of Norwich who was appointed prior of Cambridge in 1481. He represented the English province at the general chapter in La Rochette, Provence, in 1488, and died at Blakeney in 1500. This may suggest that he was living in a building used as a guesthouse rather than with the prior.

Blomefield says that on the north side of the house



**Fig. 14** A conjectural distribution of friary lands using the map of 1769

was the church and churchyard, on the east lay the cloister, and to the south was 'the courtyard and the backhouse'. What lay to the west has a more complicated description. It reads in full:

'it abutteth upon .... a little parcel of ground at the west end of the church, as broad as the church, between the churchyard north and the friars' close now in the tenure of Sir Christopher west, and also the north end of the west close new parted with a ditch lying between the lodging now granted to Christopher west and on the [blank] called the Hills north, and the rest of the said West Close west'.

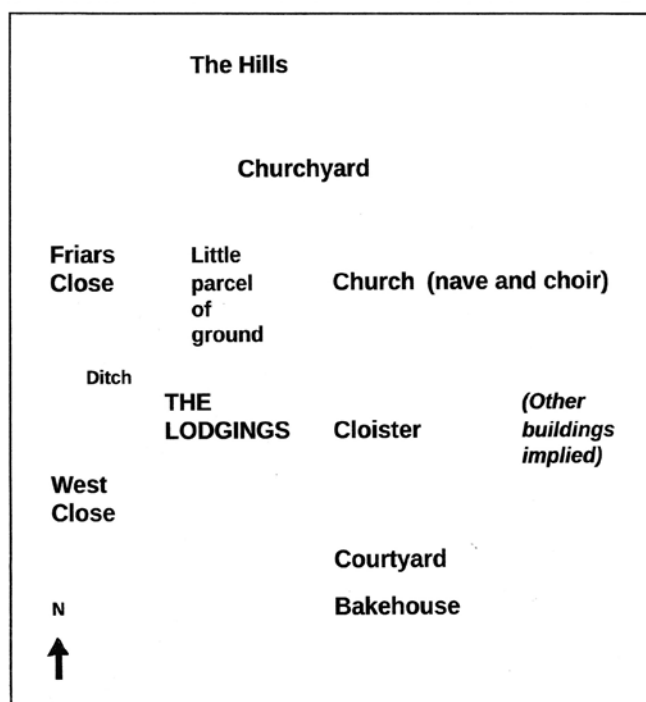
Blomefield's description of the area leased to the Calthorpes (shown diagrammatically in Fig. 15) is complementary to the pieces making up the whole property as listed in the Tudor deeds. It is not obvious how to accommodate Blomefield's statement that the Calthorpe lease was bordered on the north not only by the church and churchyard but also by the Hills, although perhaps it was the friars' close, already in Calthorpe's tenure, that bordered the Hills. As Blomefield refers to the Calthorpes having only a part of the mansion house it is not clear who had the rest of it. Perhaps Thomas Houghton, the prior at the time, lived there but it is more likely that he had a separate residence with the Calthorpes having a former guest house. Or perhaps the rest of the mansion house was no longer habitable. Either way, it could be the forerunner of the present

farmhouse, in which case the main elements of the original friary would lie to the south, east and north of the present building.

The existence of a courtyard somewhere just south of the cloister is known from other friaries. The plan of the Carmelite friary at Aylesford has an open area tentatively called the 'south court' while the plan of Sandwich (Kent) has a south court almost as big as the cloister. At the Greyfriars in Walsingham a similar area is termed the 'little cloister'. A courtyard with bakehouse can therefore be expected as part of the friary site in Blakeney.

In the absence of a stream, a well would have been needed for the friary. The OS maps of the late 1800s which mark many of the wells in the High Street show none at the friary, but a well close by the farmhouse, said to be medieval in appearance, has recently been capped. The friars would also have needed, as a minimum, a chapter house, most frequently sited on the eastern side of the cloister, a dormitory, refectory, lavatory facilities, and various storage buildings.

A popular view is that the friary once extended across Back Lane to the rear of properties on the east side of the High Street. On this assumption it would have included the properties known as The Friary, The Counting House, and Friary Barn, all just to the east of Mariner's Hill. They appear to date from the 1600s or later and there is no evidence that they or any pre-



**Fig. 15 Relationship of buildings on the friary site, according to Blomefield**

decessors formed part of the friary. It has also been suggested that the lodgings built for the Roos family in the 1300s, in accordance with their promise to the friars, could be the origin of the present Wiveton Hall but if this were the case their house is much too far away to have been within the grounds of the friary. There seems no reason to doubt that their accommodation was within the friary complex.

Another suggestion which might be made concerns the land lying between Friary Farm and Back Lane, now well built-up but initially the site of a single house called 'Whitefriars'. It was built in (or very soon after) 1924 on ground apparently containing the remnants of former buildings. In his unpublished history of 'Blakeney and its Havens' Peter Catling said: 'I can remember the site of Whitefriars in 1920 as a rather rough meadow, with abundant ridges and hollows.' He also wrote that: 'During building operations many old walls were revealed as well as quoins of Barnack stone bearing masonic marks ..... but all the walls were reburied'.<sup>55</sup> It is an attractive proposition that these features could have been part of the main friary complex but this is very doubtful because 'Whitefriars' (in the area labelled 'Manor House' on Fig. 13) is some 140 yards distant from the Friary Farmhouse, and to the west of it. For comparison, the buildings comprising the Greyfriars site in Walsingham are contained within a block some 90 yards square and the friary buildings at Hulne cover an area only 70 yards square (one acre).

The original 'Whitefriars' building has been split into four properties and other houses have been built close by. Some of the occupants of these houses have confirmed that during building operations and gardening activities they have seen nothing that could be associated with medieval occupation. The only exception is a piece of re-buried walling on the eastern boundary of 'Whitefriars' that might be medieval in date. If so, it would have been located on the west boundary of Kiln Close according to the suggestions shown in Fig. 14. The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (HER) has

no record of finds from the vicinity of 'Whitefriars', although it does record the existence of limestone blocks in the wall on the Back Lane frontage which might have been taken from the friary site.<sup>56</sup>

### The Visible Remains

The only sure evidence of the outer boundary of the friary is on the north side where a substantial wall separates the friary grounds from the steep, sand-quarried slope leading down to the fresh marshes bounded by the Blakeney to Cley embankment (Figs. 1 and 16).<sup>57</sup> These would have been salt marshes during the time of the friary, with a tidal channel and quay close by. The section of the wall nearest the farmhouse is 145 yards long and about 12ft high. It has been repaired and re-topped from time to time but has a medieval origin according to the Listed Building description. Near the western end of the wall, some 50 yards north of the farmhouse, is a large arched gateway. Much of it is modern but some coursing in the short sections of walling forming the sides of the gateway might indicate an earlier origin (see front cover).

It can be supposed that within the lifetime of the friary a pathway from Blakeney to Cley ran between the edge of the marsh and the base of the slope known as the Friary Hills. An indication of it is shown on John Darby's map of 1586 and a deed of 1636 refers to the 'way leading from Blakeney to Wiveton under the ffriers hill'.<sup>58</sup> It existed as a pedestrian way into the 1900s but only the section in front of the Friary Hills, in National Trust ownership, is still used as a (permissive) public path. In the 1300s the roadway would have been used by local people, by sailors and fishermen coming to the quays at Blakeney, Cley and Wiveton, and no doubt by potential law-breakers as well. A high wall would have provided some security from that direction, although friaries were not intended to be closed communities. It would also have provided the exposed site with some shelter from northerly winds.<sup>59</sup> The steep slope up to the wall suggests that cart traffic may have used some other entrance, even if there was a gateway in the present location. The contrary view is that an alternative entrance would be no easier for carts coming up from the quay.

The northern boundary wall extends further eastward as a lower wall for 140 yards to the eastward limit of the present property. It varies in height between 4 and 6 ft but the top of the wall is level: it is the ground surface that undulates. Much of it is relatively modern but there is older work at the base over much of its length. A straight wall some 75 yards long and about 3 ft high extends westward from the end of the high wall to the north-west corner of the present property.

These walls provide a boundary between the present Friary Farm and the slopes to the north. It is very likely that in total or in part they or their predecessors defined the northern boundary of the medieval friary. It is not obvious on the ground where the rest of the boundary would have been, although the piece of buried walling between the Whitefriars property and Friary Farm might be part of such a boundary. Aerial photography does not appear to show any features which could be interpreted as evidence of the friary bounds.

North of the farmhouse a lawn sloping gently down towards the high wall is between 2 and 3 ft higher than the land immediately to the west (Figs. 17 and 18), and is contained by a low, disintegrating flint wall. This extends from the farmhouse to the western end of the





**Fig. 16** A section of the high north wall

**Fig. 17** The western end of the high wall and the steps up to the lawn.

**Fig. 18** The lawn and the remains of its western retaining wall

high wall and is only interrupted by modern steps up to the lawn close to where the two walls meet. It is possible that this wall is the remains of a higher precinct wall separating the cemetery and other land uses on the inside from one of the friary closes, to the west, on the outside. A high wall of some 6 yards in length and 9 ft high extending from the north wall (Fig. 17) may be a remnant of such a precinct wall but its date is uncertain.

On the lawned area are three hedges running north-south for all or much of the distance between the north wall and the house. Two are close together and frame what was once a path or track from the north gate up to the west side of the house, from where a continuation today provides vehicular access to the coast road. In the lawned area is a break of slope with that part nearest the house being higher than the part further north. Whether this or the pathway has a medieval origin is impossible to say, although both are clearly shown on older OS maps. One shows a garden design which might feature both the break of slope and the remnant hedge which seems to have no function in the design of the present garden. Fig. 18 shows the remains of the wall separating the lawn from the lower ground to the west (left) and the hedge-lined pathway leading south from the arch.

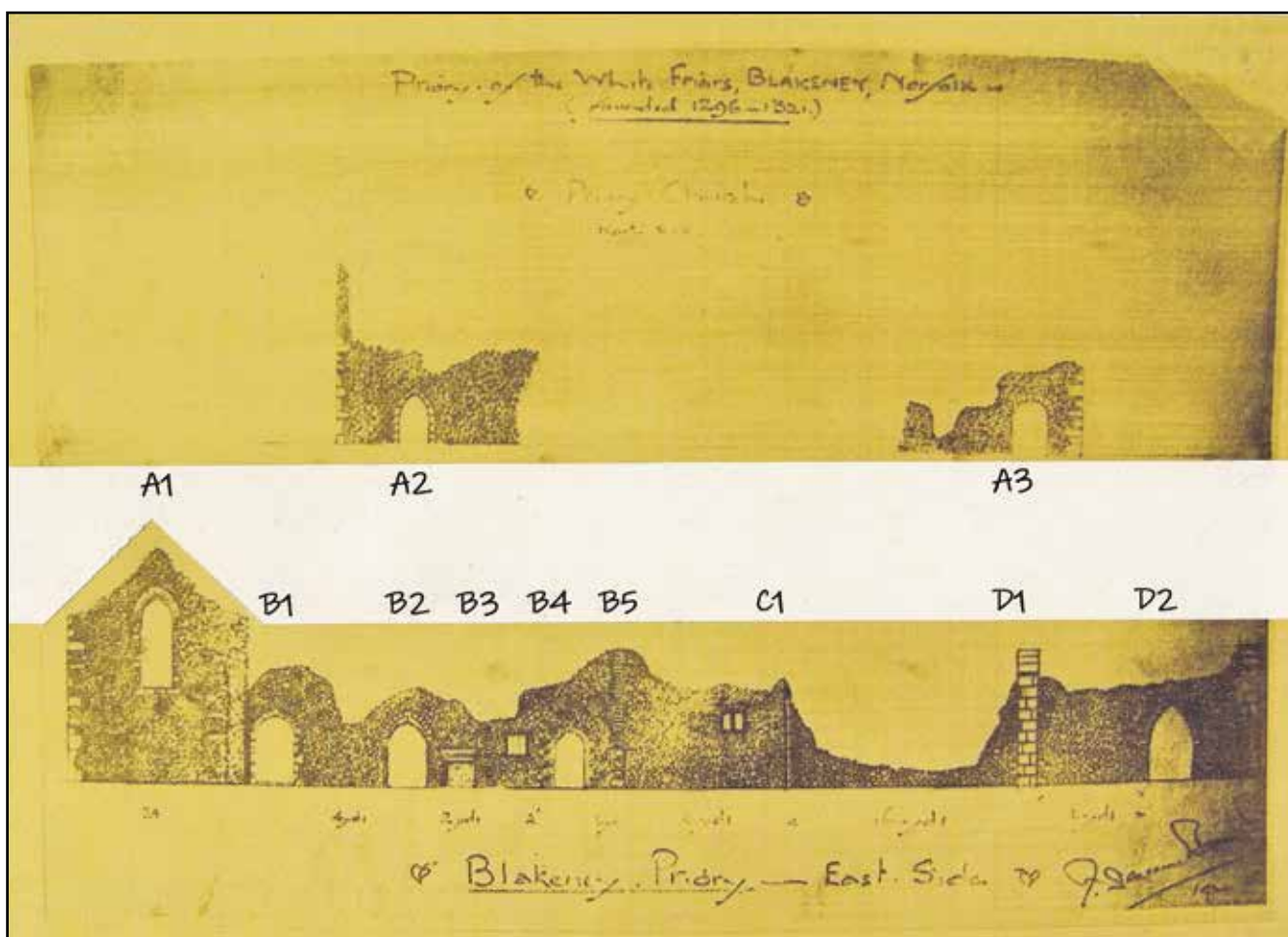
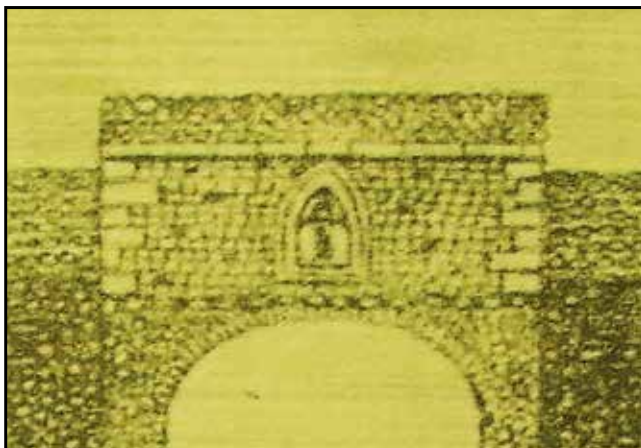
The only evidence of the physical friary lies in fragments of medieval and Tudor date present in the structure of the various buildings on site today, principally the farmhouse and a barn. Most of these are individual pieces of shaped limestone, former quoins, now incorporated in later walls. There are also doorways, some partial and some blocked, probably deriving from the original friary.

Initial guidance about where these are located exists in the form of a detailed drawing (Fig. 19) made some time in the 1920s or 1930s (Fig. 21). The signature and date are not easy to read but the artist may have been a member of the Burrows family who built the 'Whitefriars' house. The drawing comprises the eastern facades of the barn, the farmhouse, and the buildings which link them, together with drawings of two doorways in the north wall of the barn. The arched gateway in the north boundary wall is the subject of a separate drawing.<sup>60</sup>

It is of interest to compare the drawing (Fig. 19) of the arch with the actual appearance today. The nature of the flintwork is clearly and expertly shown but the detailing is a representation and not strictly accurate: the lifts and coursing visible in the wall are not shown in the drawing yet must have been there at the time. The top of the arch is also different as can be seen by comparing the drawing with a modern photograph. The brickwork forming the segmental arch is the same but above it what appears to be a course of brick dentils is now a plain course, but one which has been there some time. The quoins holding the flintwork above are not as drawn and, more obviously, the central niche is quite different – the present stones at the top may have been part of a small window in the friary. Which of these various features can be put down to 'artistic licence' and which represent actual changes since the drawing was made?

Similar caution is needed when looking at the main drawing. This is reproduced in Fig. 21 where the various features have been lettered, and Fig. 22 shows the location of each on an outline plan – a freehand sketch, not a measured one. The two main structures are the barn (A), approximately 75 ft by 25 ft, stretching east-west, and the farmhouse (D). Between these





are two other buildings (B and C), aligned north-south and with a connecting wall to the barn. A line of mainly modern outbuildings to the west of the main range has been omitted although a few stone blocks suggest an earlier origin for some of the walls. The main features numbered in the drawing are shown in accompanying photographs (Figs. 23 – 32).

The barn is notable for its patchwork of construction styles. Visually impressive is the eastern gable (A1) with a tall lancet window framed with limestone blocks of varying size and shape, none unduly weathered. The outer side of the gable wall, with its post-medieval appearance, is quite unlike its inner side which has a course of limestone blocks at mid-window height and irregularities suggesting that when finished it was plastered over. It could once have terminated at a high first-floor level, and as the whole wall is relatively thin

**Fig. 19 (upper left) The top of the arch as drawn, c.1920s**

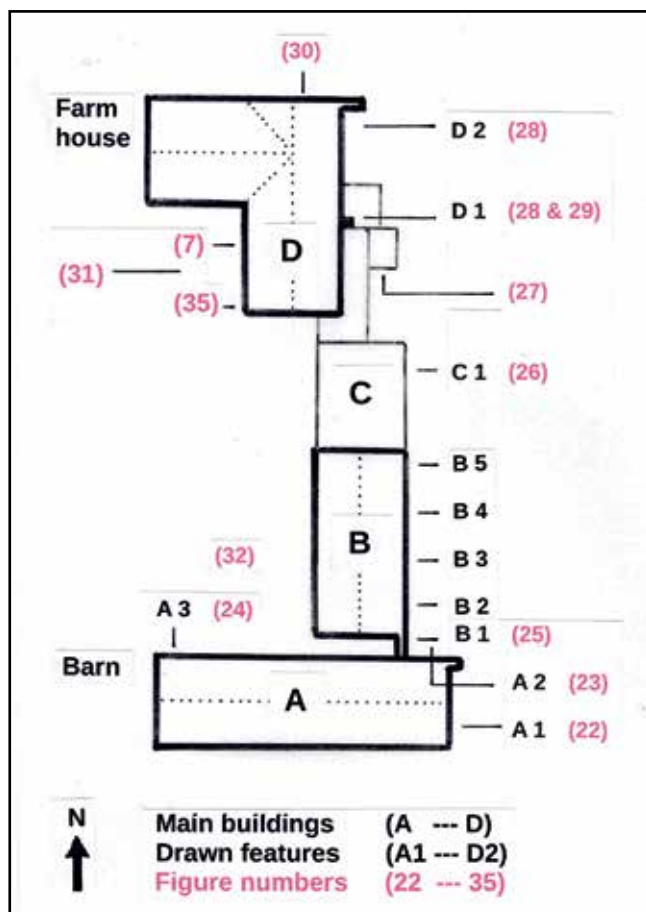
**Fig. 20 (upper right) The top of the arch at present, 2020**

**Fig. 21 Early architectural features as drawn, c.1920s**

it could have originated as an internal dividing wall. The north wall of the barn, over 2 ft thick, once extended beyond the present gable end towards the east, an indication that the building has been shortened.

Fig. 24 shows the north wall of the barn at its eastern end. The upper section of neatly coursed flints with brick used at regular intervals is typical of some houses





in Blakeney High Street, and is also used at the same height on the southern side of the barn. The brick termination at its eastern (left) end probably relates to the re-built gable. The stones of the doorway in Early English style (A2) (Fig. 24) are well weathered and appear to be a survival from the early days of the friary, but no further evidence is available on the inside.

A doorway at the western end of the barn wall (A3) (Fig. 25) is described in the Historic Environment Record as 'a 16th century three-centred arch, chamfered with dripmould'. The arch is topped by an arc of brick stretchers alternating with flint, a common pattern, and beside it is a small patch of walling in faced flint, in contrast to the cobbles elsewhere. This doorway, too, could pre-date the Dissolution: there would have been less incentive to install one of this quality afterwards in what would have been an ancillary building. The western gable of the barn is a modern construction. The HER entry notes that the barn, a Grade II listed building, is 'said to have been the refectory of the friary'.<sup>61</sup>

In the connecting wall between the barn and the southern end of the farmhouse range the arch B1 (Fig. 26) is slightly flatter than suggested in the drawing. Doorways B2 and B5 are no longer apparent in their drawn form, and the small window (B4) no longer exists. The feature labelled B3 is shaped like a small stone chimney piece which ought to be facing into a room (Fig. 27) rather than towards the outside. The small window C1 appears to be early but another window in a modern porch (Fig. 28) suggests caution in interpreting features along this frontage. The drawn stretch of low walling between C1 and D1 has been replaced by a modern construction, including a porch giving entrance to 'Friary Farm'.

The feature D1 (Fig. 29) is a substantial buttress of which only the upper portion is now visible from the outside. The lower section, now inside a small room, is in excellent condition and the stones encasing small pieces of flint flushwork show little weathering, although this does not rule out a date from the early years of the friary. The base has not been sheltered long as the drawing shows the whole of the buttress exposed.

The doorway D2 is matched by another in the north wall of building C which is not included on the drawing. Fig. 29 shows an eastward projection of the wall at the north end of the farmhouse, seen also in Fig. 31. The gable end, with stone blocks defining the width of the original farmhouse, continues into a later west wing.

Fig. 32 shows the western side of the main house, with (top centre) the date plaque, not necessarily in its original position, and the Roos arms built into the kneeler (at the top of the right-hand downpipe). Fig. 34 is a general view of the southern end of the farmhouse, with the post-medieval southern gable, the west wing (left) and the buildings to the south (right) whose eastern frontages contain the features shown in the drawing and accompanying photos.

**Fig. 22 Location of drawn features on a plan of the buildings**

**Fig. 23 The rebuilt eastern end of the barn (A1)**

**Fig. 24 The NE corner of the barn with doorway in Early English style (A2)**





**Fig. 25** The NW corner of the barn with Tudor doorway (A3)

**Fig. 26** Arch in the wall connecting the barn and the building adjacent (B1)

**Right hand column:**

**Fig. 27** Small window in the northernmost ancillary building (C1)

**Fig. 28** Window built into the modern porch

**Fig. 29** The farmhouse facade with buttress (D1) and doorway (D2)







### The Finds

Reported finds that might have been associated with the friary are very few. Some individual pieces of limestone found in walls around the village and further afield may have come from the friary site after demolition of the buildings. It is also possible that they derive from the earlier parish church because the nave and tower were being rebuilt in the early 1400s. They could even have come from the medieval Guildhall which has lost its upper storeys.

One particular piece, once in the wall of a High Street property, is of some interest. It is a limestone corbel in the form of three heads shaped around half of its circumference: a female head between two tuncured males (Fig. 34). Unfortunately the stone is badly weathered and little is left of the male faces. The female face has a headdress consisting of a horizontal fillet, or headband, over the forehead and what could be a barbet, a band of linen passed under the chin, over the ears and pinned on top of the head, but the section below the chin is missing. Such a headdress would be typical of the early 1300s when the friary was being built, although the description prepared for the HER dates the corbel just to the 14th century.<sup>62</sup> It might be wondered why the friary should feature a female head. It can be assumed that the mason obeyed the convention of the time that unmarried women should be portrayed without a headdress. Perhaps it is a reference to Maud, the wife of William Roos who could himself have been represented elsewhere. A capital in Stiffkey church has three female heads, all with the more flamboyant headdresses of the 15th century.

Other items found over the years include a shield carrying the arms of William Roos (Figs. 35-7): three water bougets, each consisting of two water bags on a short yoke, or 'gules, three water bougets argent' in he-



**Fig. 30** *The base of the buttress now enclosed (D1)*

**Fig. 31** *The north gable of the farmhouse with later wing*

**Fig. 32** *The western elevation of the farmhouse with date plaque*

**Fig. 33 (RH column)** *The farmhouse viewed from the south*



**Fig. 34 Corbel with female head between two tonsured heads**

raldic terms. The shield, provenance uncertain, is now in the archway leading to the house 'Whitefriars' on Back Lane. A similar one is incorporated in the kneeler on the south-western corner of the friary farmhouse.

Some other items have been dug up from around the friary during the past hundred years but there seems to be no formal record of their existence – or in most cases their present whereabouts. A complete undamaged statue of a 'seated bishop with mitre and a long nose' is said to have been unearthed but no further description of it is available, neither is there any public knowledge of its source or present location. An undamaged statue might imply burial before the Dissolution. The presence of a mitre does not have to identify the statue as a bishop, as it could also be worn by senior abbots and by some priors as well.

Maintenance work in the farmhouse gardens and caravan park occasionally turns up pieces of shaped limestone which would have come from the friary buildings. More rarely are found pieces of worked stone which would have been part of some architectural feature.

More significantly, wall foundations were seen in 1986 when drains were being laid to the caravans in the area to the east of the farmhouse known as 'the orchard'. A trench along the high north wall, and some 4 yards from it, disclosed the presence of some 7 or 8 walls lying north-south some 3 or 4 yards apart from each other. These appeared to be part of a building of unknown date which does not appear on any map. The Crossed Friars in London had a row of almshouses with these dimensions, the Carmelite friary there had some a little larger, and elsewhere tenements for rent were built, but such initiatives may not have been possible

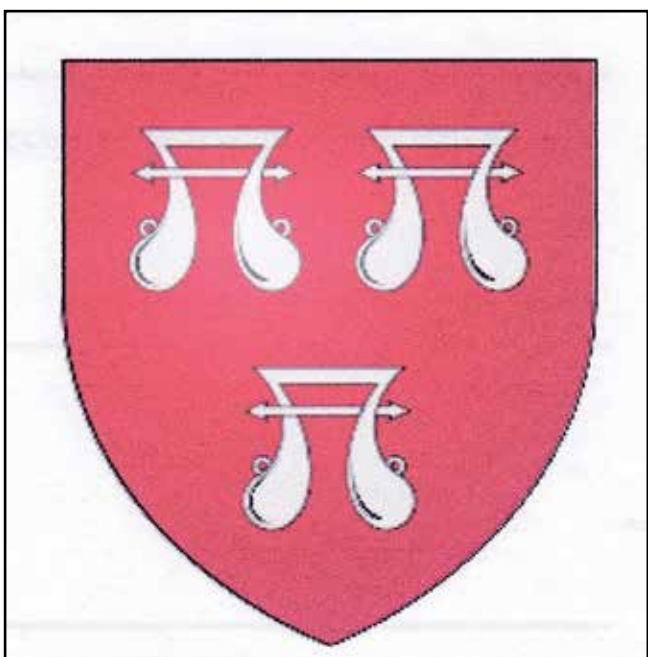
in rural Blakeney and there is no reference to them in the records.<sup>63</sup> The Franciscan friary at Ware had a row of guest-rooms 3½ yards wide but these extended out from the western side of the cloister. Other footings seen in the orchard were less substantial and no particular pattern could be discerned.

The trench for a drain heading northwards in the driveway to the farmhouse came across the wall foundations of the demolished eastern end of the barn. It also exposed the foundations of the wall extending eastward from the north end of the farmhouse. That trench then turned to the west to run some 5 yards from the north side of the house. Before it reached the western end of the facade a feature was uncovered at a depth of 3-4 ft, thought at the time to look more like a pillar than a wall. If so, it might have been part of the church structure, although it is further to the west than would be expected; perhaps it was a buttress.<sup>64</sup>

There is no evidence of wall footings south of the barn towards the mill. The access to the mill is by an east-west roadway with a drop of c. 3 ft on its northern side. The bank contains some brick rubble but not such as to suggest a former wall. Farming operations over the years have accelerated the movement of soil downslope so that the ground level at the high north wall is some 3 ft higher than on its seaward side. Trenching here confirmed that the extra depth is topsoil in origin, not subsoil.

Local stories tell of unofficial excavations in the





mid-1920s which turned up two stone coffins with one large skeleton and one small; both were reburied. Their location is not certain but some time around 1960 Peter Catling recorded that it was 'behind the east end of the north gable' of the old farmhouse. On that basis it is quite likely that the burials were in the church. It is no surprise that a short skeleton in a stone coffin should have been identified immediately as the Carmelite leader John Baconthorpe, of whom it was said that 'his pen, penknife, inkhorn, one sheet of paper and one of his works would together have made up his height', so short was he. His burial place is not certain, but he would not have been the first friar to return to Blakeney to end his days.<sup>65</sup>

## 6 Conclusion

The sketch plan in the previous section (Fig. 15) has given an indication of how the buildings of the friary may have been disposed. The best evidence is in Blomefield's description of the house rented to Christopher Calthorpe by the prior in 1537. He lists the buildings and other features around it, demonstrating that the house lay on the western side of the friary complex.

The evidence on site is consistent with Calthorpe's residence being the forerunner of the present farmhouse. Two doorways in the barn could be pre-Dissolution in date which implies the existence of a friary building in that location. Both lead out to the north, in the direction of other buildings. The barn once extended further to the east and this, too, would fit in with the friary buildings lying to the east of the present ones. Surface features also suggest that a precinct wall might have extended southwards from the western end of the high wall in a straight line to the western side of the present buildings.

Towards the east the high north wall becomes a low wall at the point where it crosses the parish boundary. The enclosure map shows that this boundary coincides with a field boundary of some kind between that point and the wall surrounding the windmill – there is nothing to mark the parish boundary south of the mill. Along the parish boundary between the high wall and the mill on the earliest OS 6 inch map has the term 'def' meaning that a once visible boundary line has been 'de-faced' or demolished. South of the mill the description is 'und' meaning undefined on the ground.

Parish boundaries, important when tithes on agricultural land began to be payable to the parish priest, were generally established well before the early 1300s when the friary was being built. This suggests that the high friary wall terminated at a pre-existing boundary that had already defined land given to the friary. Even so, the possibility that the boundary was created, or perhaps adjusted, later to coincide with the dominating presence of the wall should still be considered. The boundary between Blakeney and Wiveton splits the total area (marshland excluded) into two almost

**Fig. 35** Roos shield on a gateway in Back Lane

**Fig. 36** Roos shield incorporated in a friary farmhouse kneeler

**Fig. 37** Heraldic arms of William Roos

equal parts (Fig. 38). Perhaps the original parish was 'Wiveton' from which was separated first Glandford and then Blakeney as its maritime importance began to challenge the estuary port of Wiveton (the bigger village at Domesday). While this is just speculation it could explain why the boundary heads from the end of the high wall straight to the NE corner of Blakeney church, whether the C13th chancel or the later small tower, leaving church and churchyard on the very edge of the parish.<sup>66</sup>

The termination of the wall at the parish boundary suggests that an eastern precinct wall might have extended southwards from the eastern end of the high wall, just as appears to be the case at its western end. Two such walls would be almost parallel, to be expected if their origin goes back to medieval furlong boundaries. They would enclose an area of about  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , or perhaps  $4\frac{1}{4}$  acres, depending on the position of a southern boundary. The larger extent would tally with Narborough's equivalent field, which was also said to cover  $4\frac{1}{4}$  acres.

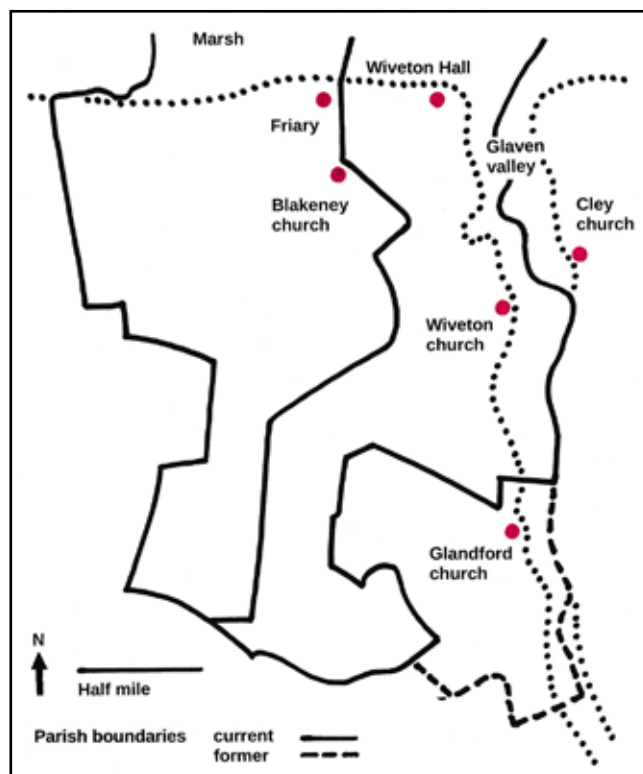
A precinct of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  or  $4\frac{1}{4}$  acres could be a typical one, although it is not easy to be sure of comparable figures from other friaries. The Burnham Norton walled precinct seems to have expanded from an initial 1 acre to what has been described as a 'generous'  $5\frac{1}{2}$  acres by 1353. The Whitefriars precinct in Norwich covered the same area, with about one third of the site ( $1\frac{3}{4}$  acres) occupied by buildings, only slightly more than the area of the Greyfriars buildings in Walsingham. Expansion of urban friaries could be constrained by surrounding development, although the Great Yarmouth precinct was around 8 acres.<sup>67</sup>

The friary at Blakeney, in common with others, started with a small site and grew larger through successive gifts of land. The initial piece of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres appears to have been given between 1304 and 1307. Thereafter it was over 20 years before another acre was given in 1329 and then 4 more in 1331. The assertion in the VCH that the 'church and all offices' were complete by 1321 seems unlikely, unless some were put up as temporary structures.

Much is uncertain about the early development on the site. The friary was established on manorial land, probably farmed in furlongs and strips. It is not clear that the initial grant was large enough and of the right shape to carry all the buildings that were needed. Could there have been an understanding that more land would be given when the development of the site required it? Would an earlier precinct wall or boundary have been extended when later gifts were made?

Despite so many unknowns, Fig. 39 is an attempt to bring various indications together into a single plan, although still in outline, incomplete and tentative. Friaries tended to have common elements in their layout so that if the location of one is known the approximate position of others can sometimes be inferred, which may help in the preparation of a plan. More difficult to assess in advance is the likely scale of the buildings, which can vary according to the area available for development, the wealth of the friars, and the extent of rebuilding during the life of the friary. A more detailed study of the site would be needed before a reliable plan could be prepared.

In Fig. 39 the suggested precinct is defined by the high wall, the low western garden wall and the parish boundary, together with a conjectural wall to the south for which there is no evidence except for short



**Fig. 38 The parish boundary between Blakeney and Wiveton**

**Opposite page:**

**Fig. 39 The possible extent and layout of the precinct**

**Fig. 40 A recent aerial view of the friary site**

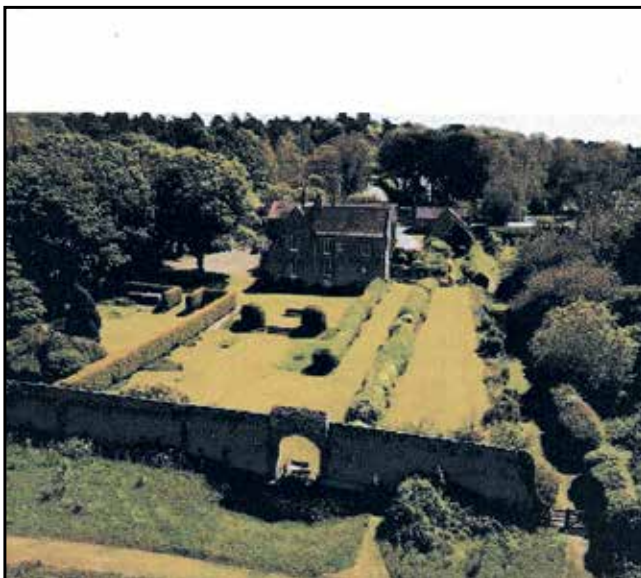
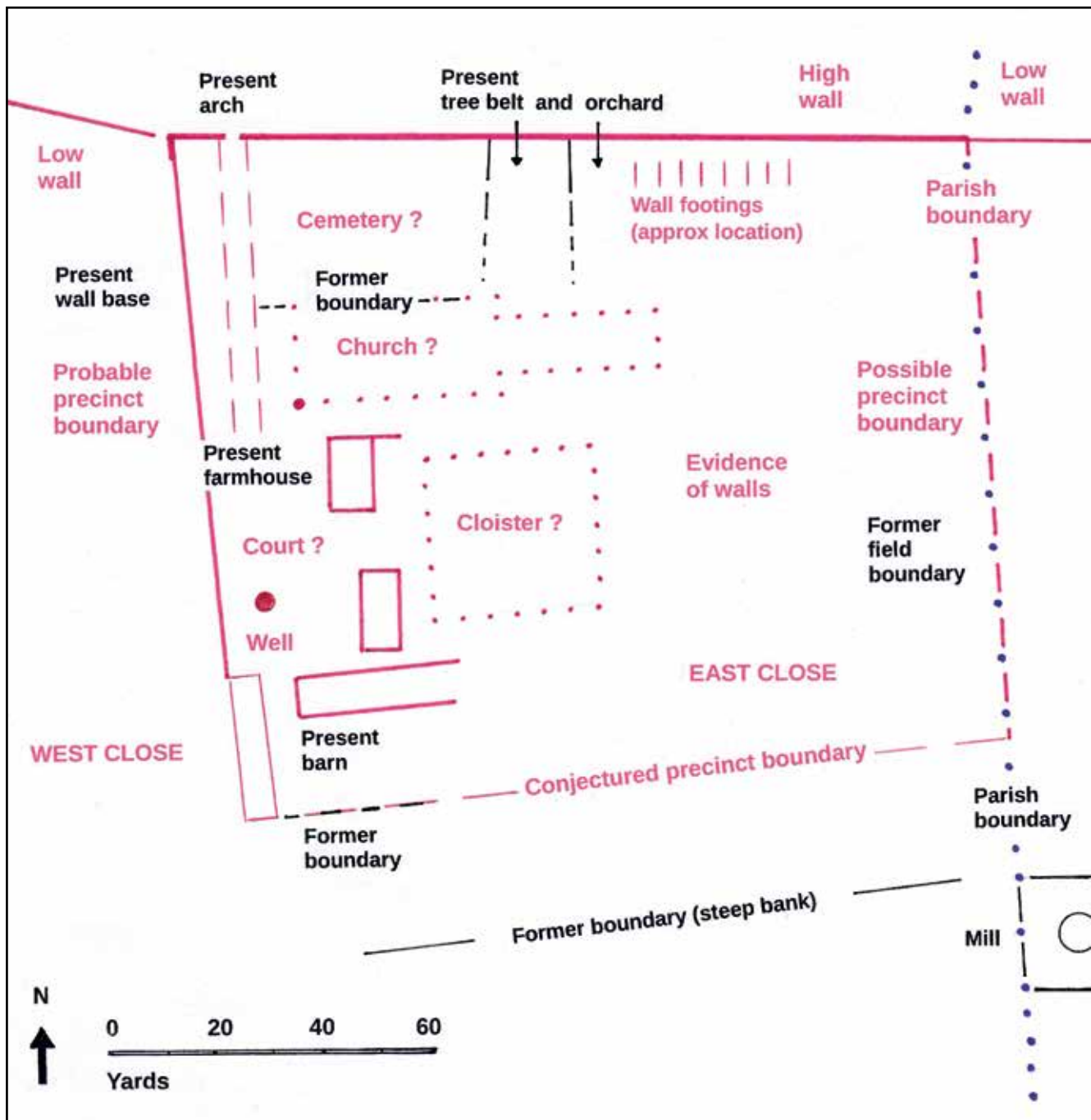
boundaries at the western end shown on early OS maps. The area of this precinct would be  $3\frac{1}{2}$  acres. Another possibility for the southern edge of the precinct is the old boundary now defined by a steep bank beside the roadway to the mill, which would enlarge the precinct to about  $4\frac{1}{4}$  acres.

Also shown are the present buildings with medieval features. The present farmhouse and associated buildings represent the western range of the cloister, including the guesthouse and perhaps the prior's room, while the barn on the southern side was probably the refectory. Cloisters were almost always square and one has been shown, although no evidence of walls appeared in the drain trenches. A church has been located with nominal dimensions of 200 ft in length and 50ft width in the nave. This takes the northern side up to a line in the lawned area shown on old maps.

The pathway from the arch in the north wall has been retained as a means of lay access to the nave which, internally, would have been visually separate from the choir used by the friars. The path leads down to an area containing the well which could be the court to the south of the lodgings which Blomefield refers to. The friary probably had a gatehouse, as did Burnham, but no location has been suggested on the plan.

In the orchard, the eastern half of the suggested precinct, there would have been other buildings framing the cloister, including the chapter house and





dormitory, and the trenching may have exposed traces of them. The cemetery should lie between the church and the north wall. Depending on the position of the east and west boundaries and the density of burials, the cemetery could have carried some 300-350 graves before re-use would have been necessary, sufficient to allow some villagers to accompany the friars into eternity.

### Finally

This article has described the origin and demise of the Carmelite friary and placed both in the context of their times. It has also attempted to say something about the lives of the friars despite the paucity of information specific to Blakeney. Finally, some pointers to the possible extent and layout of the friary have been suggested which could provide a basis for more detailed work, including geophysical surveys, some time in the future.

## Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the help given by Dr Brendan Chester-Kadwell who shared his knowledge of friaries and related matters, and who commented constructively on the draft of this article. Fr Richard Copsey generously provided the information he has gathered about the friars known to have had an association with Blakeney. Julian Hiles, the manager of the Friary Farm Caravan Park, allowed the author free access to the grounds and present buildings.

The drawn plans and most of the photographs are by the author. Credit for the remaining photographs goes to John Cucksey and Historic England (Fig. 1), Dick Kelham (Fig. 34) and the Friary Farm Caravan Park (Fig. 40). The author also thanks Godfrey Sayers for supplying a copy of his redrawn map of 1586, and the (then) owner of the Cranefield map for allowing it to be photocopied. Figure 37 is from Wikipedia, other sources are listed in the Notes.

The author has tried to avoid factual errors but future work is bound to produce not only additional information but also different views about the layout of the friary.

*This article was drafted before coronavirus restrictions were imposed but further intended visits to the NRO and to the friary site could not be made, and a document ordered from TNA could not be supplied.*

## Notes

- 1 Patrick Fitzgerald-Lombard, (ed.), *Carmel in Britain: Essays on the Medieval English Carmelite Province, Vol 1 People and Places*, C. E. Institutum Carmelitanum, 1992. This book provides a very useful guide to the medieval Carmelite order in England and its individual houses, and is a source of material for the early part of this article.  
  
Brendan Chester-Kadwell, (ed.), *Burnham Norton Friary: Perspectives on the Carmelites in Norfolk*, Oldakre Press, 2019. This new book outlines the history of the Carmelite Order and provides a detailed account of the Carmelite friary at Burnham Norton. Individual chapters are written by experts in their field and there is a substantial bibliography. It also includes a long list of friars known to have spent time at Burnham, some of them authors of texts extant or lost.  
  
Frank Meeres, *Not of this World: Norfolk's Monastic Houses*, Frank Meeres, 2001. This book has an excellent chapter on the friars, with brief mentions of Blakeney.
- 2 Brian Ayres, *Norwich*, Batsford and English Heritage, 1994.  
The City's purchase of the Dominican friary in 1540 brought with it the friary archives, including the deeds of the constituent properties. This was the only friary in the country bought for civic use. The main surviving parts of the friary are now known as St Andrew's Hall (the former nave of the church) and Blackfriars' Hall (the former chancel).
- 3 Rev William Hudson, (ed.), 'The Assessment of the Townships of the County of Norfolk for the King's Tenths and Fifteenths as settled in 1334', *Norfolk Archaeology* Vol 31, 1895.  
Robin Glasscock, (ed.), *The Lay Subsidy of 1334*, OUP, 1975.
- 4 Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, Vol IX (contributed by the Rev Charles Parkin), 1808. Blomefield died in 1752 before completing all his volumes on the county. He had access to the collections of Bishop Tanner, Peter le Neve (Norroy King at Arms) and others. Much of his own material passed to Parkin; the rest was dispersed, some becoming the Frere manuscripts now held in the Norfolk Record Office.
- 5 Arthur Doubleday, (ed.), *A History of the County of Norfolk*, Vol. II, VCH, Norfolk, 1906.
- 6 Medieval documents often use the *mark* instead of the pound. It was valued at 13s 4d, and half-marks (6s 8d) and quarter-marks (3s 4d) were also used. One hundred marks was £66 13s 4d, a substantial sum.
- 7 Bodleian Library, MS Dodsworth 85 f.38a. An accurate transcription is in: J. Stevens, *Additional Volumes to Sir William Dugdale's 'Monasticon Anglicanum'*, II, 1723, pp. 368-9.

## Abbreviations

- BAHS Blakeney Area Historical Society  
The Society maintains a History Centre containing copies of local documents.
- HER Historic Environment Record  
Information on archaeological sites, finds and historic buildings, maintained by county councils and other authorities.
- NRO Norfolk Record Office  
Open to the public in The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich.
- PRO Public Record Office  
Merged with other bodies in 2003 to form TNA.
- TNA The National Archives  
The repository for national documents, based at Kew.
- VCH Victoria County History  
A national project to publish county histories begun in 1899, Norfolk being one of very few counties where work is neither completed nor in progress.



- 8 TNA, Calendar of Chancery Warrants, 230, PRO C.81/48 (31 July 1304).  
TNA, Inquisitions ad quod Damnum, List & Indexes Vol XXII, File CXIV, 1315-16.  
The calendar records the decision as 'The prior and Carmelite friars to retain land in Blakeney acquired from Michael le Bret'. Subsequent decisions have a different format, all referring to other land retained by the donor as, for example, in 1336-7: 'John Storm to grant land in Blakeney to the prior and Carmelite friars there, retaining land in Wiveton, Blakeney and Cley'.
- 9 TNA, Calendar of Patent Rolls, 449 Mem. 25, PRO C.66/145 (24 April 1316).
- 10 Patrick Fitzgerald-Lombard, (ed.), *Carmel in Britain, Vol. 1 People and Places*, 1992, p.13.
- 11 TNA, Calendar of Patent Rolls, 453 Mem. 15 (26 October 1329).
- 12 TNA, Calendar of Patent Rolls, 164 Mem. 23 (6 August 1331).
- 13 TNA, Calendar of Patent Rolls, 405 Mem. 23 (20 March 1337).
- 14 TNA, Calendar of Patent Rolls, 210 Mem. 6 (19 September 1352).
- 15 TNA, E.179/149/7 (1327) and E.179/149/7 (1332). These lists have been published in:  
Timothy Hawes, (ed.), *The Inhabitants of Norfolk in the Fourteenth Century: the Lay Subsidies of 1327 and 1332*, Norfolk Historical Aids, Vol. 20 (issue 3), T. Hawes, 2001.
- 16 TNA, Registers of Edward the Black Prince, Vol. IV, (20 May 1351 and 26 May 1352).
- 17 TNA, Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous (Chancery), (1 June and 18 July 1380).
- 18 Caroline Fenwick, (ed.), *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381*, Part 2, OUP 2001.
- 19 John Wright, 'The Old Guildhall at Blakeney', *The Glaven Historian* No. 5, 2002.
- 20 TNA, Calendar of Patent Rolls, 461 Mem. 2D (3 May 1353).
- 21 In one of his notes Derick Mellor refers to records showing that the Guildhall was built in 1360 and was sold by the friars in 1522 but he gives no source for the information.
- 22 Mike Salter, *Medieval English Friaries*, Folly Publications, (reprint) 2010. This gazetteer contains plans of some friaries, including the Carmelite friary at Hulne, the Franciscan friaries at Ware and Walsingham, and the Augustinian friary at Clare. Hulne has the most complete layout of any Carmelite friary in England, including precinct walls 12ft high (the same height as the north wall at Blakeney).
- 23 Nick Holder, *The Medieval Friaries of London*, Thesis submitted for PhD, University of London, 2011. Much of this material has since been published in: Nick Holder, *The Friaries of Medieval London from Foundation to Dissolution*, Boydell Press, 2017.
- 24 In 1994 Lucy Vinten Mattich, then a post graduate student studying the friaries of East Anglia, provided the author with references to published material about Blakeney friary. The lengthening intervals between provincial chapters held at Blakeney are almost identical to the sequence at Burnham Norton.
- 25 Information received from Fr Richard Copsey shows that the Provincials at the six chapters held in Blakeney were successively: Robert Ivory, Stephen Patrington, John Kynynghale, John Milverton, John Vynde and John Bird. This, together with other information about Provincial chapters, is included in: Richard Copsey, 'The Administration of the Medieval English Carmelite Province: Provincial Chapters', pp. 67-102, in Michael Robson and Jens Röhrkasten, (eds), *Franciscan Organisation in the Mendicant Context*, LIT Verlag, Munster, 2010.
- 26 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (on-line 2004).
- 27 Fr Richard Copsey provided information from unpublished records about friars associated with Blakeney.
- 28 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580*, Yale, 2nd edition, 2005. As a perceived means of shortening time in Purgatory, trentals of various kinds were popular with the lay population, although less so with Church authorities.
- 29 James Gairdner, (ed.), *The Paston Letters*, Alan Sutton, 1986 (reprint of 1904 edition).
- 30 The instruction was that 'all the friars of every monastery in England must be assembled in their chapter house, and examined separately concerning their faith and obedience to Henry VIII, and bound by an oath of allegiance to him ..... ' (etc). There was also a requirement that 'each house must be obliged to show their gold, silver and other moveable goods, and deliver an inventory of them'. TNA, Letters and Papers [L & P] of Henry VIII, Vol 7, no. 590, p. 236, 3 Apr 1534.

- 31 Carole Rawcliff, (ed.), *Norwich Chamberlains' Accounts 1539/40 – 1544/45*, Norfolk Record Society, Vol LXXXIII, 2019.
- 32 T. H. Swales, 'Opposition to the Suppression of the Norfolk Monasteries. Expressions of Discontent: The Walsingham Conspiracy,' *Norfolk Archaeology* Vol XXXIII, Part III, 1964.
- 33 Wills proved in the Consistory Court of the diocese of Norwich (NCC) and in the Archdeaconry Courts of Norwich (ANW) and Norfolk (ANF) can be found using the online index provided by the Norfolk Record Office and can be seen there. Wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) are held by the TNA at Kew. Those referred to in this article are:
- |      |                |     |              |                |
|------|----------------|-----|--------------|----------------|
| 1394 | John Blakeney  | PCC | Rous 3       | PROB 11/01/074 |
| 1502 | John Symons    | PCC | Blamyr 20    | PROB 11/13/314 |
| 1509 | John Symonds   | PCC | Barrett 20   | PROB 11/16/492 |
| 1512 | Agnes Symonde  | PCC | Fetiplace 16 | PROB 11/17/249 |
| 1528 | John Grenwey   | PCC | Porch 39     | PROB 11/22/638 |
| 1529 | Thomas Holtyng | PCC | Jenkyn 8     | PROB 11/23/129 |
- These dates are the year of probate, those in the text are the year the will was written.  
John Calthorpe (1503) left 20 marks (£13 6s 8d) to the poor of five local villages but no specific sum to the friary. Christopher, his son and executor, was to arrange for a friar priest to sing for his soul in the friary for one whole year.
- 34 John Wright, 'The Origins of Blakeney Church', *The Glaven Historian* No. 5, 2002.
- 35 John Wright, 'The Military Survey of 1522', *The Glaven Historian*, No. 12, 2010.
- 36 TNA, L & P of Henry VIII, Vol 13 no. 1212, pt 2, p. 508, 1538.
- 37 TNA, L & P of Henry VIII, Vol 17 no. 137, pp. 57-8, (6 Feb 1542) PRO C.110/69.
- 38 TNA, L & P of Henry VIII, Vol 17 no. 220, p. 104, item 69, (20 March 1542) PRO C.66/995.
- 39 TNA, L & P of Henry VIII, Vol 18 no. 231, p. 132, 1543.
- 40 TNA, E.321/20/70. NRO, Allen Papers, MC/106/8 contains an almost complete transcription of the document. Kenneth Allen assembled a substantial amount of information about Blakeney and adjacent parishes, much of it from the (then) PRO. The BAHS History Centre has a copy of all his papers.
- 41 TNA, L & P of Henry VIII, Vol 17 no. 258, p. 139, f.57 (19 March 1542).
- 42 T. H. Bryant, *The Churches of Norfolk*, Vol 9, Norwich Mercury, 1902. Derick Mellor, *The Glaven Valley: Historical Jottings*, 1989. Mellor has also written about the friary in: Derick Mellor, 'Blakeney Friary, Norfolk', in *Mount Carmel*, Spring 1992, Vol. xl no. 1, pp. 46-9.
- 43 TNA, L & P of Henry VIII, Vol 19 no. 690, pt 2, p. 419, item 67, (November 1544).
- 44 TNA, Calendar of Patent Rolls, 617 Mem. 36 (10 Feb 1563) PRO C.66/995.
- 45 Basil Cozens-Hardy, 'Calendar of Frere MSS: Hundred of Holt', *Norfolk Record Society* Vol I, 1931. Cozens-Hardy records no source for Blomefield's notes on the friary, only that they are in Blomefield's own writing.
- 46 John Darby, Map of Blakeney Haven and Port of Cley, 1586. The original map, once owned by the Thomlinson family of Cley Hall, has disappeared leaving two 19th century copies and a redrawing by Godfrey Sayers.
- 47 Greenville Collins, *Great Britain's Coasting Pilot [etc]*, Mount and Page, 1753.
- 48 Greenville Collins, Chart of Blakeney Haven in Great Britain's Coasting Pilot (etc), 1693, British Library Maps, C 8 d 7. The Norfolk Heritage Centre in the Forum, Norwich, has a copy of the last edition published in 1792. John Peake has commented on the significance of the friary church tower on this chart and speculates on the relevance of an Act passed in 1566 prohibiting the removal of prominent landmarks in order 'to save and kepe them and the Shippes in their charge from sundry Daungers'. *The Glaven Historian*, No. 10, 2007.
- 49 NRO, NAS 1/1/14/Blakeney (Frere MSS).
- 50 NRO, BL 49/1, Copy of map by William and Corba Cranefield 1769. The coloured original is in private ownership.
- 51 Harry Apling, *Norfolk Corn Windmills*, The Norfolk Windmills Trust, 1984.
- 52 NRO, PD.619.31, List of inhabitants of Blakeney by household, 1770.  
(A copy can be seen in the BAHS History Centre.)



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- 53 NRO, Allen Papers, MC/106/28/5-8.
- 54 Auction Catalogue for the Calthorpe Estate in Blakeney, Wiveton, Cley and Langham, 22nd July 1911, (BAHS History Centre).
- 55 Norfolk Heritage Library, The Magnus Catling Collection, *History of Blakeney and its Havens*, c. 1960, NN 942.612 (Library ref. 30129052142958). (Magnus) Peter Catling was a local schoolmaster who prepared a long unpublished typescript on the history of Blakeney, combining research by various people with his own memories of more recent times.
- 56 Norfolk Historic Environment Record (HER) No. 40057. The County Council's records of earthworks, archaeological finds and historic buildings can be seen on website [www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk).
- 57 HER No. 6158.
- 58 Hampshire County Council, Calthorpe Papers, 26.M.62 T2 265.
- 59 The friars would not have known that the 'Little Ice Age' had begun, but they would have known that from around 1300 warm summers could no longer be expected, and that the period 1315-1317 in particular was a time of widespread famine.
- 60 NRO, Allen Papers, MC/106/12.
- 61 HER No. 47563.
- 62 HER No. 18368.
- 63 The 1542 deed has reference to 'rents and annual profits' presumably from pieces of land within the estate let out as gardens. While there is no reference to rent from property it is a reminder that John Calthorpe who wished to be buried in the 'chancel of the white friars' was described on his brass of 1503 as one of the 'founders' of the friary.
- 64 Information kindly provided by the former manager of the Caravan Park.
- 65 If Catling's account is correct various questions arise. How big was the excavation and was anything else discovered ? Was it a random choice to dig there or was there some particular reason for it ? At what depth were the coffins found ?
- 66 It is not certain that the Domesday church is under the present one. A site high on an exposed hill is anomalous locally: the churches at Wiveton, Cley, Morston and Wells are all on low knolls very close to where sea-going boats would have been drawn up.
- 67 The precinct areas for Norwich and Yarmouth friaries are taken from *Burnham Norton Friary* where they are attributed to: Deirdre O'Sullivan, *In the Company of Preachers: the Archaeology of Medieval Friaries in England and Wales*, Monograph 23, Leicester Archaeology, 2013. O'Sullivan credits Blakeney friary with a precinct of 13½ acres which, being the total amount of land gifted to the friary after its initial founding, can be questioned as a definition of its 'precinct'.

# Ploughing On: A Plough Pebble From Field Dalling

*Eric Hotblack*

## Synopsis

*The writer explores the background of the plough pebble found while field walking in the parish of Field Dalling.*

## Project

The writer is carrying out an intensive field walking project in the Parish of Field Dalling and to date 38.26 ha (94.5 acres) have been walked in 25 m squares in a block of adjacent fields spanning the valley floor.

## Site

When the Chapel Meadow (HER No. 4988) was ploughed up for re-seeding, permission was gained to field walk this meadow which is adjacent to arable fields already walked. It provided a very rare opportunity to find what use man has made of this area between arable fields (Fig. 1). To the north is the road to Binham and adjacent to it, within the meadow, is a small stream flowing west to join the River Stiffkey.

Very few finds were made either of prehistoric worked flints or of pottery. While the conditions in January and February 2006 were not ideal, as good as on arable fields, it does indicate that this grassland has not been used as intensively as the adjacent arable land.

## Find

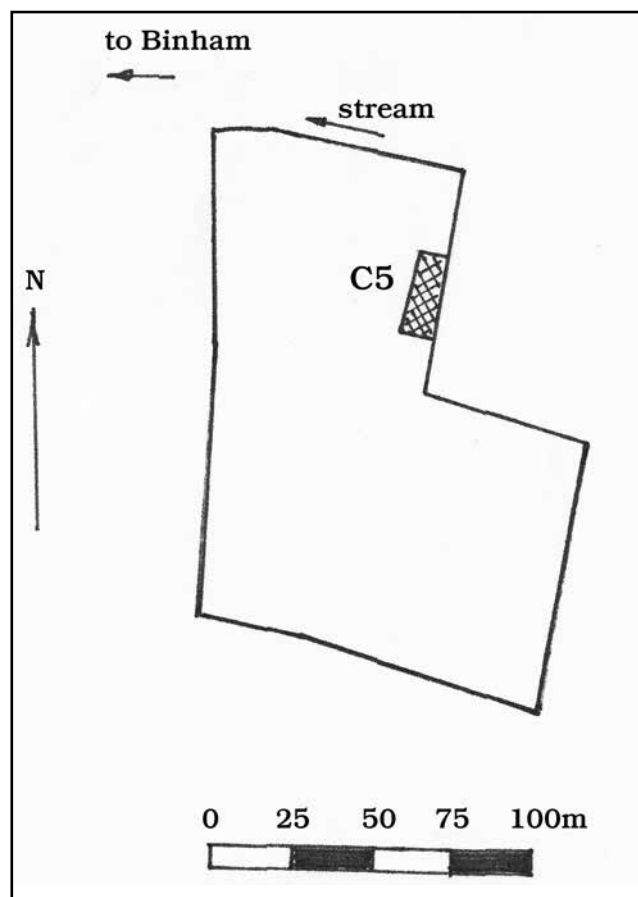
A very unusual flint (Fig. 2) was found in part square C5, and handed in to the Museum Service for identification. Unfortunately no positive identification was made, the best explanation that the late Professor Peter Robins had was that it had been jammed in a piece of machinery, and was probably recent.

It was still thought to be worth further investigation and many other archaeologists were asked about it, with no positive identification. Suggestions such as a rubber, linen smoother, or hone were all unlikely, due to its shape, not being easily held, and the very distinctive polishing and pattern of wear on its surface. Obviously, as a surface find it could be from any period up to the present day, and can only be identified by comparison with similar objects which have been excavated, together with other datable finds.

## Likely identification

When reading a report of excavation in Portmahomack in North East Scotland, mention was made 'other finds included a number of worn plough pebbles. Commonly associated with early medieval sites, these were set into the base of a plough to reduce wear on the wooden sole plate as it bumped along the ground'.<sup>1</sup> So it might have been set in the sole plate of a wooden heavy plough (Fig. 3).

To test this theory two oval sectioned pieces of flint were set in a block of oak and fitted to the rear furrow of a Norwegian made 6 furrow Kverneland L.B. 85,300 reversible plough, pulled by an American 220 hp John Deere 7930



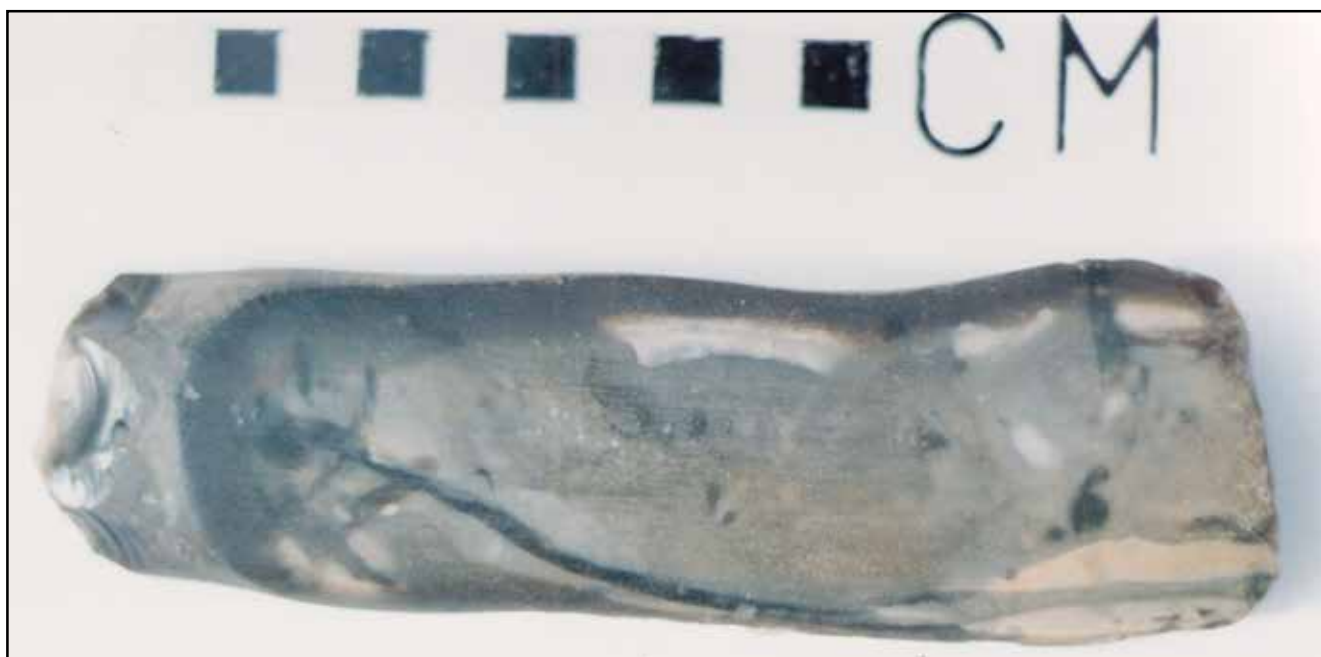
**Fig. 1. The Chapel meadow, Field Dalling, HER 4988**

tractor. The block was lightly spring loaded so as to not upset the plough setting, by holding the share out of the ground and preventing penetration. It ran along the furrow bottom making a small groove as it slid over the soil. The wear pattern was replicated (Fig. 4) and some wear was saved on the wooden block. So the soil in this area does polish flint in this way and prevent wear on the oak block. But two main questions remain.

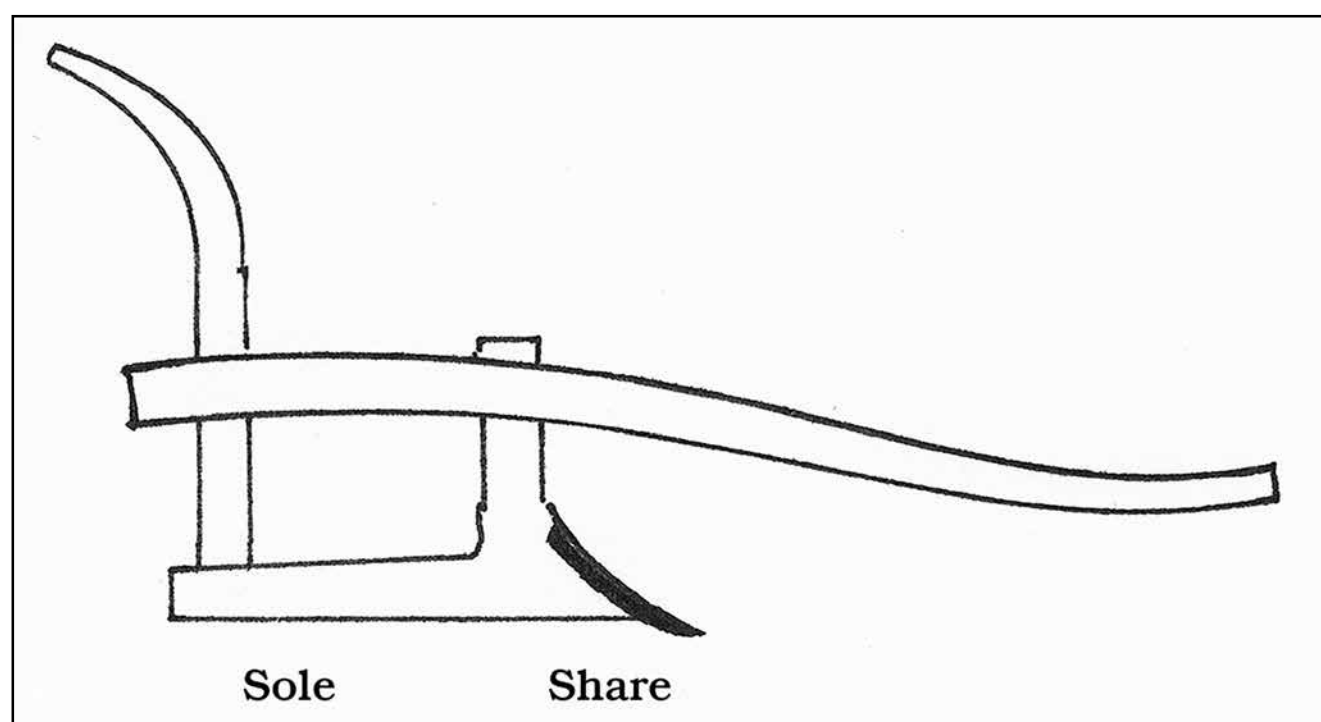
## What period was it?

It must be Iron Age or later, for iron to be available to make the important part of the plough, the share, but too expensive or unavailable to make the rest of the plough, which is slipping through the soil, not cutting it (Fig. 3). The sole plate regulates the depth, preventing the share diving in too deep and its weight aiding penetration. In the early Iron Age iron-tipped plough shares made the cultivation





**Fig. 2** *The plough pebble from Field Dalling*



**Fig. 3** *A heavy wooden plough*

of heavy soils easier and in the early Roman period at the latest 'eared' ploughs which could turn a furrow came into use.<sup>2</sup> In East Anglia Iron Age fields were typically square due to their being cultivated by an ard, essentially a single-tined cultivator which had to be used firstly in one direction, and secondly at right angles to loosen all the soil, resulting in the most economical shape of square fields. This is the 'coaxial' system described by Tom Williamson,<sup>3</sup> remnants of which are thought to survive nearby at Wells. In Roman excavations iron parts of heavy ploughs have been found – very different from the light prehistoric ard.<sup>4</sup> This allowed cultivation of heavier land which the ard could not do. The prehistoric-type fields then became amalgamated to form longer fields, a shape better suited to the heavy plough which only works lengthways. No ev-

idence of the field systems to suit the heavy plough has been found as yet in North Norfolk.

There is very little evidence of Saxon fields or Saxon ploughing, only in Cornwall was some Saxon ploughing buried by windblown sand trapping the parallel lines of heavy ploughing.<sup>5</sup> At some point in the Saxon period the field systems were reconfigured, as recorded in the Domesday Book, and this must be related to the use of the heavy plough, a longer strip shape being economical to work, resulting in the furlongs of the Medieval open field system. Now all the soil is moved in one pass of the heavy plough. More tractive effort is required to pull it with a larger team of oxen. With greater depth of loosened soil, the soil microbes can make more nitrogen available to the growing crop, in addition to the advantages of burying crop



**Fig. 4. Replica flints in block of oak**

residues, weeds and incorporating manure which would lose effectiveness if left on the surface. In Medieval times ploughing was widespread, and illustrations of ploughs appear, notably, in the Luttrell Psalter.<sup>6</sup> In the post-Medieval period iron became more available, but the Medieval open field farming system was breaking down to individual farms owning land, the strips being amalgamated into fields of economical size and shape for their ploughs.

#### **How did it get there?**

**Lost in work:** this seems very unlikely. The soil seemed very undisturbed, it had not been ploughed in living memory, and four 'pot boiler' sites were discovered which were very fresh, without any other soil mixed in with them, or any hill wash soil to cover them. The scarcity of pottery seems to confirm the work of Mike Medlar that this was Beckingate Common, so would not have been manured or ploughed.<sup>7</sup>

**Transported:** if the plough was being moved from one block of arable land to another, it might have been moved across the common land for access to another block of land.

**Fell to bits, broken up, discarded:** the plough may have been left out in weather conditions which caused the wood to split so the flint fell out, or the plough abandoned so

it fell to bits, its wood eventually used for firewood. If the sole plate had to be replaced, the flint may not have been re-used for the new sole plate, different plough parts have different wear rates, so need replacing at different times.

**Plough Monday:** on Plough Monday, the first Monday after Twelfth Night, a plough was dragged around the village to get money before starting the year's ploughing, it could have fallen off then. Probably a less heavy plough would have been chosen for this job, but an old unwanted plough could have been used, so it would not have mattered if it had been damaged.

**Ritual:** Bog finds in Denmark of parts of wooden ploughs, have provided the only surviving wooden parts of wooden heavy ploughs in Europe.<sup>8</sup> Why they were deposited there remains a mystery, but one possibility is ritual. Before this is dismissed as fanciful one should note that Plough Monday could also be described as ritual. So a possibility is deliberate deposition in a boggy area by the watercourse.

#### **Conclusions**

Unusual objects which are not frequently seen by the Identification Service risk being misidentified, or not identified at all, so it is worthwhile asking other people and remaining open minded until a valid identification is made.

This flint must be from the sole plate of a wooden heavy plough, and the wear/polishing pattern is replicated by experiment. The stone one sees today is a mixture of natural, man-made and worn in use, the polishing, if done deliberately would take a very long time to achieve. Plough pebbles must have been under-recorded or misidentified which probably makes them seem very scarce in Norfolk. Though it could date to any period from the Iron Age to the present day, there is as yet no evidence in North Norfolk of the use of wooden heavy ploughs or of field systems proving its use. The connection with Cistercian sites noticed in East Ireland seems to be replicated here in Field Dalling, there being only two Cistercian houses in Norfolk, in Marham and Field Dalling. Finding due to chance or thorough field work must not be ignored.

#### **Acknowledgements**

The late Professor Peter Robins of the Finds Identification Service of the Norfolk Museums Service; the late Mr John Holden, many archaeologists asked and more recently ploughmen.

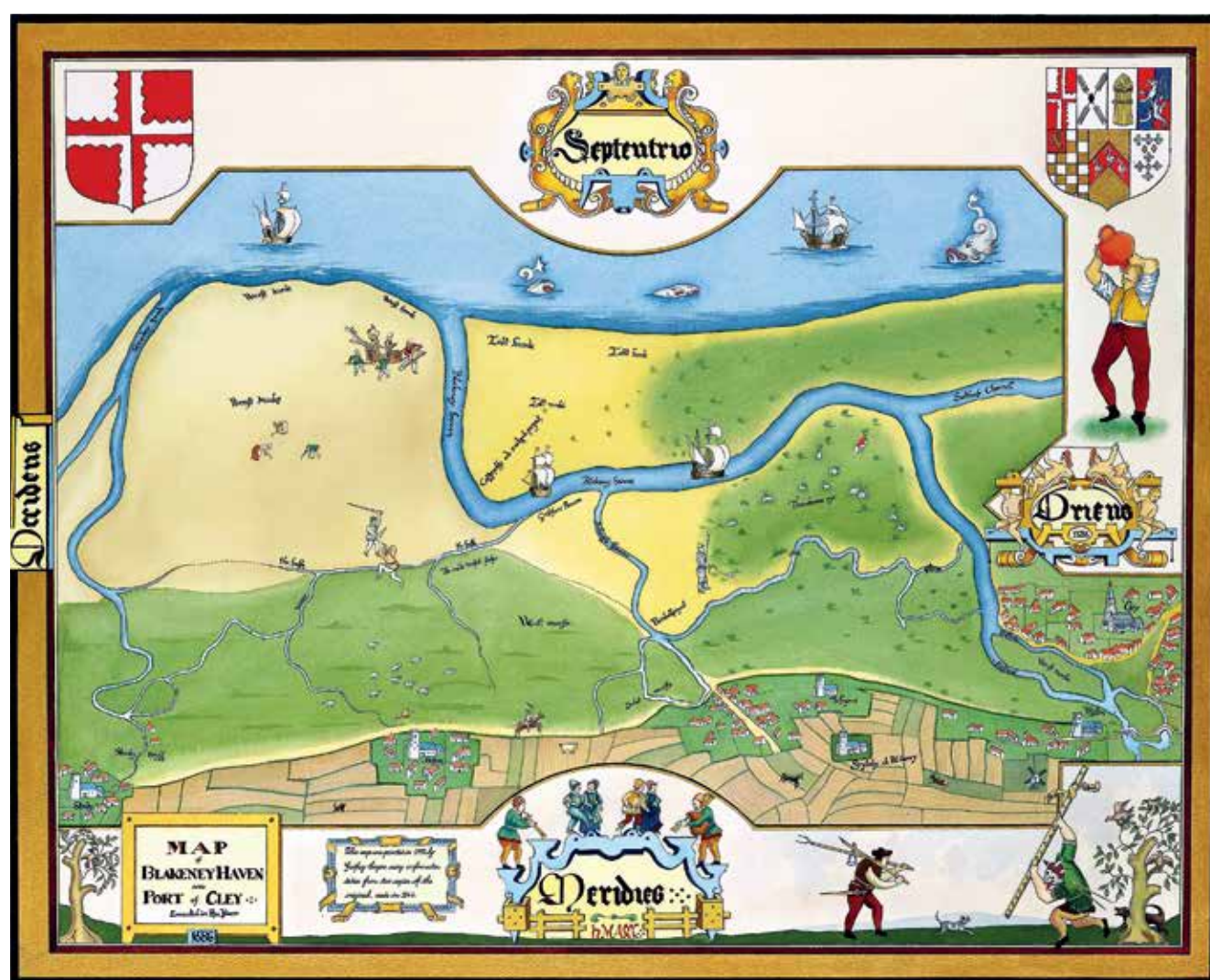
#### **Notes**

- 1 C. Catling, 'Picts on the Peninsular', *Current Archaeology* 321, December 2016, p. 22.
- 2 K. Greene, *The Archaeology of the Roman Economy* (University of California Press, 1990), pp.75-6.
- 3 T. Williamson, *The Origins of Norfolk* (Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 25.
- 4 C. Taylor, *Fields in the English Landscape* (Sutton, 2000), p. 48.
- 5 Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
- 6 J. Backhouse, *Medieval Rural Life in the Luttrell Psalter* (The British Library, 2000), pp. 16-7.
- 7 M. J. Medlar, *Field Boundaries of Manor Farm Field Dalling* (1997, unpublished).
- 8 G. Lerche, 'An Experimental Approach to Medieval Cultivation: The Danish Wheel Plough and Tillage Practice', p. 46, in *Early Agricultural Remnants and Technical Heritage (Earth): 8,000 Years of Resilience and Innovation, Volume 2 Exploring and Explaining Diversity in Agricultural Technology* (Oxbow, 2014).



# The 1586 Map of Blakeney Harbour: some further questions

Frank Hawes



## Synopsis

*This note highlights some anomalies in the western side of the map around Stiffkey and suggests a possible reason for this.*

Articles in *Glaven Historian* 1, 2, 9 and 16 have covered the origins of the 1586 map of Blakeney Haven and the Port of Cley and the surveyor who drew it<sup>1</sup>. For the ease of any reader who has not seen those articles we print again Godfrey Sayers's excellent copy which he based on the two copies made of the map in the 1840s (above).

At the time that the two copies of the map were made the left hand side of the original had been damaged, but this only seems to have applied to the bottom left hand corner. A note on the Cooke copy says: *This*

*corner of the map within the dotted line wanting when copied in 1846. A dotted line on the Long copy suggests that a strip about 7-8cm wide by about 35cm long had gone from the bottom edge of the sheet but without impinging on the drawn area of the map.*

However, apart from this minor damage to the bottom left hand side of the sheet the whole map seems to be unbalanced. Whereas the north, south and east have elegant cartouches, the west side has only the word 'Occidens' squeezed into the border on the Cooke map as copied by Godfrey Sayers but missing altogeth-

er on the Long copy. Also the village of Stiffkey has been slipped into the left hand corner even though this is not its geographical position.

The relationship between measurements taken on the 1:25,000 OS Pathfinder map and those on the Long copy of the 1586 map are fairly consistent with the exception of the position of Stiffkey which has been moved considerably to the east.

It seems that the map-maker was less familiar with the Stiffkey area than he was with the other villages. Apart from moving the village he shows a small stream (labeled 'Stiffkey Goate') rising north of the village but fails to show the Stiffkey River which in fact flows south of the church and then east halfway to Morston before turning north and out into Freshes Creek to join the channel opposite the present position of Far Point.

We know from the articles by Jonathan Hooton and John Wright that the map was drawn to provide evidence in the dispute between the manors of Wighton and Cley as to who had rights of wreck and salvage on Stiffkey Sands and the heraldry on the map makes it clear that the map was provided by the Cley side of the dispute. Perhaps it was simply that a decision to include Stiffkey in the map and prevent a cartouche from encumbering the disputed area was made after John Darby had surveyed the area and started to draw his map or was it perhaps a nefarious ploy by the Cley side of the case to reduce the apparent area of the disputed sands on the east side of the Glaven?

- 1 Jonathan Hooton, '1586 map of Blakeney Haven and Port of Cley: Part I', *Glaven Historian* 1, pp. 3-7; John Wright, '1586 map of Blakeney Haven and Port of Cley: Part II', *Glaven Historian* 2, pp. 3-8; Raymond Frostick, 'The Map of Blakeney Haven and Port of Cley – 1586', *Glaven Historian*, pp. 29-30; Diana Cooke *et al.*, 'John Darby: Land Surveyor in East Anglia in the Late 16th Century', *Glaven Historian* 16, pp. 3-10.



# The 'Black Book of Stiffkey'

## Some Notes on the Church of St John the Baptist, Stiffkey by the Rev C Harold Fitch

*Rev Dr T J Fawcett*

### Synopsis

*Charles Harold Fitch, rector of Stiffkey from 1932 to 1942, and successor to Harold Davidson, kept a book in which he compiled information on St John's church.<sup>1</sup> While not all of his notes merit publication, here I have selected three main topics which are worth putting on the record: these are (a) his notes on the church's terriers (lists of property and land belonging to the church) from 1845 to 1933; (b) a description of the restoration work of 1935 and the opinion of the Dean of Norwich when he visited the church then and (c) a description of the gravestones or wall monuments inside the church. A fuller transcription is housed in the Blakeney Area Historical Society's History Centre.*

### 1. The Stiffkey Terriers

#### A. The Terrier of 1845

A true Terrier of all the glebe Lands, Messuages, Tenements, Tythes portions of Tythes Rent Charges and other Rights Belonging to the Rectory of Stiffkey and Parish Church of Stiffkey in the County of Norfolk and diocese of Norwich and now in the use and possession of Randle Barwick Brereton Rector of Stiffkey,<sup>2</sup> there or his Tenants taken made and renewed according to the old evidences and the knowledge of ancient inhabitants at a Vestry holden this tenth day of April in the year of our Lord 1845 pursuant to due and legal notice given in Church on Sunday last for that purpose and exhibited in the ordinary Visitation of the Right Reverend Father in God, Edward, lord Bishop of Norwich holden at Fakenham on the 15th day of April 1845.

1st. The Parsonage House is built with brick and stone, and covered with tiles, the dimensions of the ground it covers is about thirteen perches - the outhouses consist of a Barn Stable and Coach House built with brick and stone and covered with tiles, dimensions of Barn and Yard about 13 perches and the dimensions of Stable and Coach House about 5 perches. There is also a walled in kitchen garden adjoining the Stable containing about 22 perches.

2nd. A building of stone and brick covered with slate erected in the year 1844 upon glebe land near the Church for a School Room. The quantity of Glebe Land in the whole is 66ac.l.r.21p. lying in a ring fence bounded on the West by land belonging to James Buck<sup>3</sup> and the Rt Honble Lord C. Townshend, and on the East by the Road leading from Stiffkey to Morston, this crossing the said Road, by the River, and bounded on the South by land belonging to the Rt Hble Lord Charles Townshend and again to the Sd Road leading from Stiffkey to Morston. Shrubby 5ac.l.r.34p. Wood, Camping Hill Plantation 2ac.l.r.7p., Churchyard 1ac.0r.9p. Arable, further Eight ac. 7ac.l.r.17p. first Eight ac. 7a.3r.8p. Mumford Close 2a.l.r.3p. First five ac. 4a.0r.0p. middle five 4a.2r. 15p. Camping Hill five ac. 5a.l.r.6p. further five ac. 4a.0r.32p. Road five 5a.0r.7p. Pasture Bangay Green

Road 0a.2r.36p. Camping Hill 3a.0r.7p. Stone Meadow 8a.l.r.15p. Church Meadow 3a.3r.7p. There are three Trees in the Churchyard and some about the House.

3rd. No Augmentation Estates belonging to the Church.

4th. The Rectorial Tythes have been commuted at a Rent Charge of £423.11s.5d including £16.11s.10d for the glebe land.

7th [sic] The Furniture of the Church consists of One Bell (The Minister finds the Bell Rope), Stone font, Iron chest and Wooden Chest, good Prayer Book and Bible for the Minister and prayer Book for the Clerk, one surplice and a Communion Cloth. There are also belonging to the Church of Stiffkey One Silver Flagon weighing 33½ oz avoirdupois the inscription thereon 'Donum Johannis Lucie Blackman Armigr', and one Silver Chalice weighing 9 oz avoirdupois with this inscription 'Stewky Saynte John and Marge Anno 1567' also one Silver Plate 12 oz avoirdupois with this inscription, 'Given to the use of the Lord's Table in the Church at Stiffkey Sept 7th 1672 by one who desires onely to be known to God, and to have a name written in Heaven.' Also one small Plate, of Silver, weighing 2¼ oz avoirdupois without any inscription. One linen napkin, linen cloth for Altar Table and Basket for containing the above plate.

8th. There is no land or money left for the repair of the Church.

9th. The Churchyard fence is a wall built with stone, and repaired by the Parish.

10th. The Clerk is appointed by the Minister, his wages £1.6s. per annum, besides his fees. There is one piece of land in the parish of Stiffkey vested in the Surveyors of the Highways, being part of the half-year lands in the parish of Stiffkey aforesaid, Containing 1a.0r.28p. bounded by land allotted to Stephen Frost towards the north and East, and by land allotted to William Worthingham towards the South and by the road leading from Stiffkey to Walsingham towards the north-west, the Rent of this land was left to be applied towards the

repairs of the homeward part of Stapleford Bridge in Stiffkey, but has always been applied towards the maintenance of the Poor of the said Parish.

In testimony of the truth of the above mentioned Particulars We the Rector Churchwardens and Chief Inhabitants have here unto subscribed our Names this 14th day of April 1845.

R B Brereton, Rector  
Thos H Bayes,<sup>4</sup> C T [?] Page Churchwardens  
W Howard, John Howard Chief Inhabitants

## B. The Terrier of 1867

[Almost word for word as above; differences as follows]

2nd A building . . . [for James Buck read] Thomas Bland

5th [7th above]. . . without any inscription. Two linen napkins, Two linen Cloths for Altar Table and Basket for containing the above Plate, an oaken Bier presented by Mr C T Page, and a Pall presented by Mr John Howard.

9th [post 10th]. . . la.0r.28p. bounded by land allotted to and belonging to Florence Rippingall towards the north, East and South and by the road leading from Stiffkey to Walsingham . . .

R B Brereton, Rector  
G T Page, Paul Bell, Churchwardens  
Wigmore Howard, John Howard, Chief Inhabitants.

## C. The Terrier of 1879 [Preamble]

A full true and correct description of all the above-mentioned property and Rights is contained in a 'True Terrier' made at a vestry meeting on the tenth day of April in the year of our Lord 1845, and exhibited at the Lord Bishop's Visitation holden at Fakenham on the 15th day of April 1845, subject only to the following alterations, namely.

There are two linen cloths and two linen napkins for use of the Lord's Table. A pair of Brass candlesticks for the Altar, a metal alms dish, 2 altar Service Books, one metal altar desk.

There are belonging to the Church one oaken Bier and one pall...

R B Brereton, Rector  
W H G Buck, Saml J Bell, Churchwardens  
W H G Buck, Saml J Bell, C G Wood, Principal Inhabitants

## D. Terrier of 1901 [Differences from 1845]

2nd. A building... [for James Buck read] Major T M Vincent...

5th [7th] The furniture of the Church consists of a large 'Tortoise Stove' presented by Mrs W E Home of Shackleford, Surrey; one bell... basket for containing the above plate; an oaken bier presented by Mr C T Page; a pall presented by Mr John Howard; a carpet for front of altar Table presented by Col. J E Groom; a pair of brass candlesticks for the altar; a metal alms dish; two altar service books; one metal altar desk; Eight Hesper lamps; two standard and one swinging lamp for the chancel; two brass flower vases for the altar table; six Glastonbury chairs for use in the chancel. There are also twelve registers of Baptisms, marriages and Deaths dating from 1548; two door curtains on brass rods; a harmonium.

Eugene Sweny, Rector<sup>5</sup>  
James Green, W H Crafer, Churchwardens  
John E Groom, Frederic Rarson, Principal Inhabitants

## E. Terrier of 1908

[No alteration from previous]  
Harold F Davidson, Rector  
W H Crafer, John Mallett, Churchwardens  
Charles Reynolds, Principal Inhabitants

## F. Terrier of 1912 [No alterations]

Harold F Davidson, Rector<sup>6</sup>  
W H Crafer, Charles Reynolds, Churchwardens  
John R Gray, John E Groom, S F Wordingham, N Green, Principal Inhabitants

## G. Terrier of 1933 [Differences]

2nd. A building of brick and stone covered with tiles was erected in 1844 upon the glebe land near the church for a school, the property of the Rector and subject with the rest of the glebe to a dilapidations charge. The quantity of the glebe land is 66a.l.r.21p. lying in a ring fence bounded on the west by land belonging to Major J M Vincent and Mrs Hammond and on the north by land belonging to Major J M Vincent and Mrs Holdsworth, and on the east by the road leading from Stiffkey to Morston.

5th. There are belonging to the Church; one ancient bell inscribed 'Sancte Paule, ora pro nobis', one iron chest, one wooden chest, one oaken bier presented by Mr C T Page, one wheeled oaken bier presented by the late Col. J E Groom, two painted deal coffin stools, a pall presented by Mr John Howard, six hanging lamps, six Glastonbury chairs for use in the Chancel, two door-curtains on brass rods, two sanctuary curtains on iron rods, one Tortoise stove<sup>7</sup> presented by Mr W E Home of Shackleford, Surrey, one Harmonium now kept in the school, one Positive Organ erected by subscription in 1907, one framed list of men from Stiffkey who fell and of others who served in the War of 1914-18, which hangs on the South wall of the tower, an oak table which stands before this list, and has thereon two oak candlesticks and two brass vases, a War Memorial erected in 1922 on the West Wall of the Church by the late Mrs Gray of Stiffkey Old Hall in memory of her husband, Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Gray and of the men of this parish who fall in the War of 1914-18, and on the shelf of this memorial two oak candlesticks gilded, and two brass vases. There are also a good prayer book and Bible for the minister, a prayer book for the Clerk, two altar Service Books and an Office Book, a crimson velvet Altar Cloth, one silver flagon... two linen napkins, a box containing the above linen, a carpet for the front of the Altar Table presented by the late Col. J E Groom, two long stools by the Font covered with needlework, a pair of brass candlesticks for the Altar, a brass alms- dish, an ancient wooden collecting box, and a brass altar desk. In the vestry there is a deal table with a drawer and a deal wardrobe for the vestments of the minister. There are also thirteen Registers of Baptisms, marriages and burials dating from 1548 and kept in the above mentioned chest, which stands in the vestry, and which also contains the 'Stiffkey Town Book' for the years 1748-96. There is also a large white ensign, also St George's Flag presented in 1933.

8th The Clerk is appointed by the minister and the Parochial Church Council, and his wages are £10 per annum, besides fees...

C H Fitch, Rector  
G M Robinson, C Reynolds, Churchwardens



A H Gidney, A Curson, May A Hammond, Rachel Gidney, Elizabeth S Fitch, William Grand, Phoebe A Pearson, H Beales, members of the Parochial Church Council.

Entered Nov 24th 1934.

### **Opinions of the Dean of Norwich on Stiffkey Church**

The Dean of Norwich visited the Church in the summer of 1933 and was much interested. The Dean (Very Rev D H S Granage Litt D) is regarded as almost the foremost authority on English Ecclesiastical architecture, and his opinions are valuable. They are recorded here in rather a haphazard fashion and do not cover all he said.

1. The buttresses at the East end are very early, say from 1190-1220
2. The piscina is of the same date
3. The date of the tower arch is 1290-1300
4. The north door mouldings (double ogee and deep hollows) are early 15th cent.
5. The upper part of the north porch was not a 'priest's chamber' but just an attic over vaulted roof of porch.
6. The Chancel arch is perp. replacing a smaller arch in the wall. It has the same mouldings as the north doorway.
7. The nave windows are much later than those originally in the nave.
8. The north & south windows in the chancel are 13th cent but have been altered

The Dean visited the Church again on Aug 20th 1935 for the dedication of the new work. He went round again, amplifying all that is recorded above. Three further matters developed.

1. Since his previous visit we had uncovered a niche in the north wall of the sanctuary; this he felt was an Easter Sepulchre, although of very simple pattern.
2. He said he felt that prior to the 15th cent the Nave (contemporaneous with the Chancel) had been narrower and a little longer than it is now, as evidenced by the corner stones at its west end. Apparently in the 15th cent, the most unusual step had been taken of removing the walls to their present position, where they are crowned by an ornamental parapet (obviously 15th cent).
3. The curious evidence at the south west angle of the tower; viz the comer alluded to above, with no stone quoins, the corbel to support joist and the mark of a pent-roof, seem to point to an anchorite's cell from which the present tower steps led up to the belfry, where there is actually a blocked up spy hole to the Altar.

## **2. The 'Restoration' Of 1935**

### **A. The Need, Appeal and Response**

When I came here in 1933, circumstances were such that Stiffkey Church was in a terribly neglected, dirty and even unsafe condition, and the Churchyard looked like a battlefield. These matters have been and are being attended to; what is set down here is an attempt to beautify the church. The furniture of the sanctuary was mean and unworthy; in Victorian days a second communion-step had been added, destroying the proper levels and making things very uncomfortable for communicants. The choir desks were of pitch pine and in front was a wooden desk with iron legs. The pews came right up to the chancel step and the pulpit stood in the chancel, blocking out the view of the altar, and the organ protruded across the chancel arch. When I came here

my friends all knew that there would be need of much restoration, and many of them offered to help at once. But I asked them to wait until I could see what was really needed. After 18 [months] I could see the necessity of clearing the space west of the chancel step and putting the pulpit onto it, of making new choir stalls and a new reading desk to match and balance the old, of new choir stalls, [sic] in the Sanctuary the ancient level should be restored, a new altar slab built, a new Holy Table, standard candlesticks and communion rails provided.

This looked like costing a great deal of money, so my wife and I in 1934 wrote 1150 personal letters to as many friends, asking for 1/- each, or more if they chose, and these were posted on Sept 30th. An avalanche of responses followed, beyond our wildest expectations and by Nov 12, £200 had come in. When plans were drawn up, the Church Council wished the parish to be asked, so in May 1935 further letters were sent to them, eliciting a wonderful response. A note will be appended as to the exact details of the gifts, meanwhile it can be said here that the final expense amounted to; faculty fee: £5.5s.0d; architect's fees and expenses: £41.1s.0d.; builders' work: £46.7s.0d; furniture work: £223.8s.0d; total: £316.1s.0d. This was exclusive of the cost of posting the appeal & acknowledging receipts, which came to £6.14s.6d.

### **B. The work and the Workers**

Having decided substantially what was needed I consulted Mr Cecil Upcher FRIBA of 4 The Close, Norwich not only an architect of repute, who had done work for me before and whose work is held in Norfolk in high esteem, but a valued personal friend. He came and saw the church and drew up designs for all the work mentioned in the preceding paragraph. For the building I wished to have Mr George Pearson and his son William; for the other work Mr Upcher recommended J Howard & Sons of West Pottergate, Norwich who did the Coldham Screen for me at St Peters Sheringham, and I naturally took his advice.

Messrs Pearson did their work extremely well with all that rural wisdom and cheerfulness by which we know them, and as labourer they had Mr H Haines (commonly known as 'Hinnie Haines') of Morston. The carving &c was splendidly done, and no one could have been more helpful than Mr Howard, his partner Mr Stanley and their two workmen. Needless to say, the village took a good deal of interest, especially when the discoveries were made. The services while all this was going on were held in the Nave, the old reredos standing on the chancel step and flanked to the arch by the old altar-curtains, with the altar before it, and the reading desk where the pulpit now stands (the pews were cut away first of all). The building work began on Monday July 8th and was finished on Friday August 9th, the furniture was brought in and fixed in the following week.

### **C. Details of the Building work**

The top communion step was removed; it was put in in Victorian days and made the wrong levels. We found old tiles just at the newly chosen level. The stone step was made into the surround of the new altar slab, and fitted this requirement almost exactly. The top of the new slab was filler in with new 'Excelsior' grey tiling, which was also placed on the floor to left and right of the slab, displacing red & black tiles which were used to fill up the space caused by removal of gravestones from

the chancel floor. (These gravestones will form a further topic of discussion: see below). Two pews were removed from West of the chancel step on the north side, and one on the other side; the pulpit was then placed in the newly made space on the north and the organ was put against south wall of the nave.

The whole church including the roof was then swept down and the defective plaster repaired.

#### D. Discoveries during the building

1. On the first day, when the old platform (deal) on which the choir-desks had stood was taken up to be adapted and skirted with oak for the new choir-stalls, there were found underneath 4 heraldic tombstones of which details are given below. We took these up and put them in the sanctuary where together with the one heraldic one already there (Harmer) they reach exactly from wall [to wall] suggesting that the five were there originally. The two plain (though good) stones which lay alongside of Harmer in the Sanctuary we put back under the new choir-stalls, with no platforms over, together with one (Branthwaite) which had protruded from under the communion step. Details of these also are given below.

2. There had also protruded - in the middle of the chancel - from under the communion step, a plain grey stone with places (matrices) for two brass coats of arms showing at the west end. On dismantling the step this stone was found to continue under it, and to have a brass dated 1479 to the memory of Margaret Braunche. This we regarded as our greatest find, as in the latest book on brasses, a rubbing is given with the legend, 'This brass has been lost! We have placed this stone wholly to the west of the Communion step in the chancel near the blocked up priests door.

3. We found that the window-jambs of the chancel windows were of stone, and the stone holds good of the nave windows. The clearing of the plaster away from all these must be one of our next tasks.

#### E. Details of New Woodwork

Below are given certain details of the new woodwork, which is not being described, but below are facts which do not speak for themselves (Fig. 1).

1. The Altar. This was the gift of the relatives of the late Mrs Robin Gray of Stiffkey Old Hall, who loved the church and did as much as she could for it. The donors were Major & Mrs Feilden her brother and sister-in-law and Mrs Neale Ripplingall (of Langham) their daughter.

2. The Reredos. The central picture of this (tilted so as not to reflect the West window) is a Medici print of Leonardo Da Vinci's 'Last Supper'. The painting of the central portion resembles the Old Norfolk Rood Screen style. We were not a little puzzled to know what to do with the panels on each side of the picture. Mr Upcher wanted pictures; I did not, so they arrived plain oak. The present treatment - toning in with the background of the picture, is I think adequate and indeed effective. The whole thing suggests an opened triptich, with the 'barber's poles' as the hinges. As for the ten shields, a plan will be helpful.

i. 3 12 4

b. 9 7 5 6 8 10

1. The crown of thorns 2. The Crown of glory 3. The Diocese of Norwich 4. Fitch 5. Gray - owners of Old Hall

6. Groom - holders of other Manor and advowson 7. Bacon - lords 1574-1622 8. Townshend - lord 1622-1910 9. Atholl (earls) - lord of one manor 13th cent 10. Irmingland - part lord of other manor 13-15 cent.

3. The Altar rails. We retained the old top rail, and this was put on uprights with the same pattern as the legs of the altar. The decoration on the horizontal part facing west contains the Thorn as a symbol of sacrifice. We felt it well to have an open space in the middle. The rails are dowelled into the pavement.

4. The Choir Stalls. These explain themselves, platforms have been eliminated, the front desks have been dowelled into the floor; the seats are moveable. The desks have a book-shelf so as to keep the top clear between services.

5. The Clergy desk. This desk, on the north side was copied from the old one on the south side (which was treated with caustic soda to make it lighter in colour, and the old pseudo gothic panel was replaced by one which matches the new desk and the choir stalls.) This new desk was given by Capt W H Sweny, son of the late Rev Eugene Sweny, Rector 1883-1906, in memory of his parents (to which the inscription on the east side testifies.) The west poppy head was carved with cockles & seaweed to give local colour. (I did want to have sea-lavender on the reredos, but it would have been too delicate to see at a distance.)

#### F. Other Matters

The old red carpet - in very good condition - which covered nearly the whole of the sanctuary floor, was taken up. It will go very well in the vestry. The cross stitch mat along the Communion rails will make good mats for choir stalls. This has been replaced by a blue & brown one made by me, mats of the same pattern being put in the 4 chairs (2 in Sanctuary & 2 in Reading desks) & in front of Sanctuary chairs and on and below altar step.

The velvet curtains were given by my wife's mother Mrs Hamilton B Brown of 409 East Church St, Elmira NY, USA - the old curtain over boarded-up south Doorway will probably make a cover for the old Holy Table, which has been placed at the west end of the Church.

The 3 misereres - our only 15th cent oak I removed to a position west of the font. In the present sanctuary they would have clashed in colour and being very bulky would have made the sanctuary lop-sided. Where they now are they can be properly seen - and used. They have been dressed with 'Oilit' which claims to eliminate death-watch beetle.

Finally all the walls & roofs of the church were swept down, the plaster repaired & the rain-streaks under the windows eliminated with soda-&-water. It now remains to clear all the window jambs of plaster and then to give the whole Church a coat of distemper of the present colour, except of course, the stone work.

#### G. The Dedication

The whole work was dedicated at a service on Tuesday August 20th at 7 pm. The Church was full. I took the service, the lessons were read by my brother-in-law Rev L Gethin, Vicar of Witchingham, and Rev F G Beddard, Rector of Wells, in the absence of the rural dean. The dedication was performed by the Dean of Norwich (Very Rev D H S Cranage, Litt D) who also preached the sermon, in which he recounted his conjectures about the





**Fig. 1. The sanctuary today**

progressive architectural development of the Church and drew many useful spiritual lessons.

Entered Sept 26th 1935

### 3. Gravestones in Stiffkey Church

Below are given exact particulars of every (visible) stone memorial in Stiffkey Church.

#### 1. In the Sanctuary

The stones at present in the sanctuary were moved there in 1935 with the exception of E. In every case where removal has taken place the old as well as the new position will be indicated. I believe all the stones in the sanctuary were there till the 19th cent.

A. Fig. 2. Removed here from east end of space under north choir-stall platform and projecting out (showing 'aged 61') from under the platform just by the vestry door, East of where I now is. At one time we thought this projection was a piece cut off from Branthwayt's (H) as the cracks in both seemed to correspond, but it was not so. Anne Wright was clearly the daughter of William & Anne Wilson (B & D). Her husband's (Thomas Wright's) similar stone was unearthed, cracked, two years ago, outside the south west wall of the chancel; I hope to bring it into church sometime. Inscription.

*D/S*

*Arms of Wright (D) and Wilson (S)*

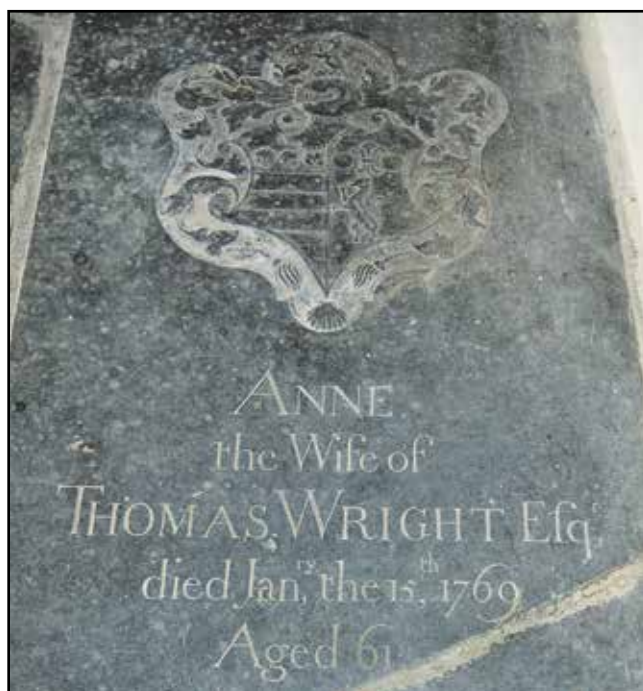
*Anne*

*the wife of*

*Thomas Wright Esq*

*died Janry the 15th 1769*

*Aged 61*



**Fig. 2. Memorial of Anne Wright**

B. Fig. 3. Removed here from west end of space under north choir-stall platform. Mr Wilson was Rector 1702-36.<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy that he was rector of Morston also. His son is buried in a high tomb south east of the chancel, which bears the Wilson arms. Details of this will be given in a later section. Inscription.

*Arms of Wilson*

*Sub hoc Lapide Sepulchrali jacet*

*Revdus Gulielmus Wilson A M*

*Collegii Regis Collegii apud Cantabrigienses  
quondam Socius  
Ac Parochiarum de Stiffkey et Morston  
per plurimos annos Rector  
Pastor, Maritus, Pater, Amicus,  
Fidelis, Dilectus, Charus, Benignus  
Quarto nonthonarum Octbris morte correptus est  
Anno Dni MDCCXXVI  
Aetatis Suae LXII*

C. Fig. 4. This middle stone was removed from the east end of the south side of the chancel, under the platform and adjoining the south wall, in other words where G is now. This Mrs Armiger was a Lucie. It is interesting that in Blane's 'History of the Bible' in my possession, the arms of Lucie are given on 2 dedication plates. On the stone there is this same Lucie crescent in the centre, flanked by two other shields. On that to the south the Lucie Crescent (S) is quartered with another coat with a good many crescents and maltese crosses? suggesting crusades on it. If the crescent has anything [to do] with the moors and Islam these might be the arms of a Blackman. The other shield, on the north side, has Lucie (S) with another coat, Regemorter or Armiger - & which of these I can find out later.

In the inscription the word LUCIE is cut LUCIAE showing uncertainty as to whether the family was Lucie or Lucia. It probably was a Spanish family Lucia which was anglicised into Lucie. The Church flagon, undated except by hall-marks (which I must examine) was given by John Lucie Blackman, almost certainly this lady's son. Inscription.

1 2 3

1. Lucie & ?Blackman 2. Lucie 3. Lucie & ?Armiger or Regemorter

*Here lyeth ye Body of Elizabeth Armiger.*

*she was ye Daughter of John Luciae of London, Marchant; she had three husbands. Her first was Ahasueres Regemorter of London, Doctor of Physick by whom she had two sons Ahasueres and William*

*Her Second husband was Jeremy Blackman of London Esq by whom she had one son Lucie Her Third husband was William Armiger of North Creek in ye County of Norfolk Esq. by whom she had no issue. She departed this life the 20th of December 1682 aged 59 years.*

D. Fig. 5. This stone was removed here from west end of south side of chancel next to south wall and under platform where H now is. I think it is most likely that this Anna Wilson was a daughter of the Rev W Harmer<sup>9</sup> (see E) [marg] Yes, the Stiffkey register shows the baptism 'Anne the daughter of William H Rector & Margaret his wife'. Feb 18 1682-3. She was born in 1682, and therefore would be 20 when her father died in 1702 at the age of 53 - a not impossible, but rather a very possible state of things. He (Harmer) left a daughter 'Anna'. He quarterings include a bend with 3 lozenges and while they seem to differ a little from those of Harmer this may well be accounted for by artistic licence (the stones are clearly by another hand altogether). Inscription.

D/S

*Arms of Wilson (D) ?Harmer (S)*

*Anna Wilson*

*Revdi Gulielmi Wilson Uxor*

*his jacet*

*Vixit annos LXXVI*

*Obijt Feb XXIV MDCCCLVII*

E. This stone lay in the Sanctuary in front of the altar, and was removed thence to its present position. It



Fig. 3. Memorial of Rev. William Wilson



Fig. 4. Memorial of Elizabeth Armiger

was unfortunately dropped, or rather it slipped, during transit, and while I am very sorry about this, I am glad that it was the only accident; later on I hope to have the inscription recut where it has been affected. Mr Harmer seems to have been the last Rector of Stiffkey who was not also Rector of Morston. Inscription.

*Arms of Harmer*

*Gulielmus Harmer A M*





Fig. 5. Memorial of Anna Wilson

*Qui in hac Ecclesia olim Sacris praeſuit  
Obiit Pridie Iduum Octobris  
Anno Dom MDCCII  
Quinquagesimum tertium Aetatis agens Annum  
Margarets dilecta Coniuge  
Et Semina Sobole superſtile  
Roberto et Anna.*

N.B. The lettering of this stone is cursive and more primitive than the others.

N.B. Since being laid these Sanctuary stones have been treated with linseed oil, which seems very successful.

## 2. In the Chancel

F. The Bacon tomb on the chancel wall has been sufficiently described elsewhere (Fig. 6), but I think it well to give here the exact alignment of the inscription. From Cotman's print it would appear that this monument was once backed by a glazed window. Inscription.

[complete inscription follows in text; omitted here]

G. This stone now lying under the back choir-stall on the south side of the chancel, near the wall, and the more eastern of the two under that stall, was put there in 1935 having been removed from the sanctuary where it was the southernmost the 3 in a row.

Inscription.

*Sacred*

*To the memory of  
Michael Ward LL B  
Rector of Stiffkey and Morston  
who departed this life  
the 8th Decr 1841  
aged 72*

H. This stone now lying near the south wall of the chancel under the choir stalls and westward of G, lay previously to its removal in 1935, partly under the communion step and partly west of it and visible. A dotted line in the inscription will show where the step came. The part under the step was in a very broken condition, we have done our best to piece it together. The year of death was missing, but this has been supplied from other sources. It is notable that

although Branthwayte<sup>10</sup> was the first rector under whom Stiffkey and Morston were consolidated, the fact of his being rector of Morston is not mentioned in his memorial. A memorial slab to several of his children (J) lies at the west end of the church. Inscription.

*Beneath this Marble  
are deposited  
The mortal remains  
of Arthur Branthwayt Clk  
MA  
and many years Rector  
of this parish,  
Descended  
from the ancient family  
of the Branthwayts of Hethel  
in this County  
of which parish  
he was likewise  
rector. He died of a lingering disorder  
which he bore  
with the most Christian Patience  
and Resignation  
August 25th AD [1792]*

I. This stone lies under the back choir stalls on the north side, adjoining the wall. It was until 1935 the northernmost of the three in the sanctuary. I do not know what connection there was between the two persons commemorated in it.

*Robert Framlingham Gent.  
Died Desember [sic] ye 3d 1681  
Being ye 67th year  
of his age.  
Here lyeth ye Body of  
Robert Fiske Esq  
only Son  
of William Fiske Esq  
and Susan his wife  
Who departed this life Octbr  
ye 22nd 1718 aged 52*

NB Stone K (qv) at the west end of the Church has more memorials to the Fiskes. [m] the Wm F thereon being evidently Robert's Father.

J. This stone lies at the West end of the Church in the nave just south of the belfry. It is nothing short of a tragedy that the heating apparatus has been planted on the top end of this and the adjoining stone (K), cutting out part of the inscription on this stone and part of the coat of arms on K. We shall have to wait until we remove the stone before we discover whether the stones were cut to allow of its insertion. The parts of the inscription on this stone are indicated by dotted lines -

*Underneath this stone  
...the earthly remains of  
[Elizabeth] Juliana & Dorothy  
who in the same week  
in May 1771  
died of a malignant fever  
in the thirteenth, Eighth and Sixth year  
of their respective ages.  
Daughters of Arthur Branthwayt  
Rector of this parish  
and Jane his wife.  
'Teach us, Great God, at thy Command  
To cease our useless grief,*



Fig. 6. Bacon tomb

Thine was the stroke and thine the hand  
 To give our minds relief.  
 These faded flowers shall at thy word revive  
 In Heaven flourish & for ever live.  
 Beneath the adjoining stone lies [K?]  
 Miles Branthwayt  
 Who died Decr 9th 1776 aged 8 years  
 also  
 Ann Branthwayt  
 Who died July 4th 1783, aged 9 years

K. Fig. 7. This stone is adjacent to J and its coat of arms is partially covered by the stove. I do not know in what capacity William Fiske<sup>11</sup> was living here; he may have rented the Hall from Townsend, or he may have owned the manor-house.

D/S Dexter most probably Fiske, of course, Sinister at present unknown.

*Gloriosam Resurrectionem expectant, hic reliquiae Gulielmi Fiske Generosi ab aula Clopton, quam vocant apud villam de Ratlesden, in agro Suffolciensi, huc carissimae & dilectissimae conjugis [sic] ergo - non ita pridem profecti.*

*Qui ad Caelum raptus est decimo tertio die Jannarij, anno post natam Salutem MDCLXX Aetatis suae XXXII.*



Fig. 7. Memorial of Rev. William Fiske



## Notes

- 1 John Wright has written an article 'The Mysteries of Stiffkey Churchyard', *Glaven Historian* 11 (2008), pp. 23-43, which discusses, amongst other things, the dedication of the two original churches in the present churchyard.
- 2 Randle Barwick Brereton was Rector of Stiffkey from 1845 to 1882. He was born in 1821 in Blakeney, and married Mary Brecknell Brereton, both of whom shared the same grandfather – John Brereton (b. 1752) who married Anna Lloyd (1762-1819). He died in 1897 aged 76.
- 3 *White's Directory* 1854: "Warborough House is a neat mansion, erected by the late James Buck, Esq., about 21 years ago, and is now the seat of and property of John Ludgate Esq." His son, James Buck was baptised in Stiffkey in 1816 and was buried in Stiffkey churchyard in 1847 aged 31.
- 4 Thomas Henry Bayes was buried in Stiffkey churchyard in 1854 aged 62. In the Stiffkey Census of 1851 he is listed as a farmer with 380 ac. in Stiffkey, employing 13 men and 10 women and boys. He was aged 58, and living in Walsingham Road, with his wife Eliza and one servant. He was born in Coston, Norfolk.
- 5 Eugene Sweny was Rector of Stiffkey from 1883 to 1906. He was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1836. He married Elizabeth Ovens in Inniskeel, Donegal in 1866.
- 6 Harold Francis Davidson was Rector of Stiffkey from 1906 to 1931. There is a large amount of published literature about him: see most recently Jonathan Tucker, *The Troublesome Priest. Harold Davidson, Rector of Stiffkey* (Michael Russell, Norwich, 2007).
- 7 This was a new invention which was first made by Charles Portway in Halstead. Essex c. 1830. He went into production and the stoves became very popular in churches and village halls. Their great advantage was that they burnt their contents at a very slow rate making them cheap to run – hence the name 'Tor toise Stove'. It was a multi-fuel stove capable of burning both wood and coke etc.
- 8 Matric. Pens. from King's College, Easter, 1695; scholar from Eton. B. at Clapham, Surrey. Fellow 1697. BA 1698-9; Deacon 24.2.1699 by Simon Patrick, Bp of Ely. Priest 18.12.1701 by Simon Patrick at Ely. MA 1702. Assistant Master at Eton. R. of Stiffkey, Norfolk, 1702-36. R. of Morston, 1713. Died Oct. 1736. Father of Joseph (1730), Robert (1740), Thomas (1738) and William (1738-9).
- 9 Born Rishangles, Suffolk, 1650. Clare Hall, Cambridge; BA Deacon 12.6.1674 by Anthony Sparrow Bishop of Ely. MA Priest 18.9.1674 by Edward Reynolds Bishop of Norwich; After he was to be curate to Mr Robert Harmer minister of St Andrews in the city of Norwich. Rector of Aylmerton 6.4.1676, by Anthony Sparrow Bishop of Norwich. Rector of Stiffkey 4.4.1679 by Anthony Sparrow Bishop of Norwich. 1702 died.
- 10 Arthur Branthwayt born 1705. Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, BA Deacon 18.3.1753 by Thomas Hayter bishop of Norwich, becoming curate of Kettlestone. Priest 7.7.1754 by Thomas Hayter. Rector of Felmingham 5.11.1754 (until 4.10.1756) and Rector of Hethel 11.11.1754 (holding this until 1792). Rector of Taverham 8.5.1756 (which he held until 29.1.1766) also becoming curate of Ketteringham 13.12.1760. Chaplain to George 1st Marquis Townsend 21.3.1764. Rector Helhoughton 13.1.1766 (holding it until 27.2.1770). Rector of Stiffkey 25.9.1769 until his death in 1792.
- 11 William Fiske. The son of Lieut. Col. John Fiske of Clopton Hall, Rattlesden (1609-1684). Baptised 29 Sep. 1638 at Rattlesden Church. He married Susan (?surname) and left a son Robert, born in 1666, (q.v. memorial above) and a daughter Susan. He died in 1670. As William predeceased his father, Clopton Hall passed to his son Robert, who was born in Stiffkey, and is subsequently referred to as 'Robert Fiske of Stiffkey and afterwards of Clopton Hall.' Robert left a son, also called Robert (1690-1734), who resided at Clopton Hall with his wife Margaret (1681-1730).

# The Blakeney Lifeboat Station

John Wright

## Synopsis

*The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) closed its lifeboat station at Blakeney in 1935. Although much has been published about the activities of the station no comprehensive history has been written. This article is not comprehensive but does present a summary account of the life of the Blakeney station from earliest times to its closure, based largely on material already published.*

## Introduction

Much has been written about particular rescues and about the boats and the men who crewed them but no detailed history of the Blakeney lifeboat station has been published. Boards hanging in Blakeney church record rescues and other services by the lifeboats, contemporary newspapers contain accounts of the most newsworthy actions, the Society's journal and newsletters have carried articles about particular aspects of the lifeboat service, and references to the activities of the station appear in a wide range of published material. By using such sources all the main elements of the Blakeney story can be found, but it may still be useful to have a summary of the whole history.

This article begins with a look at the origins of the lifeboat service and then traces the history of the Blakeney station as a chronological story from its beginnings in the early 1800s to its closure in 1935.

## Origins

### The Need for Lifeboats

Travelling by sea was always risky when ships were powered by sails alone and many were lost at sea or were driven onshore by adverse weather conditions. When big ships foundered hundreds of people lost their lives. Some of those events are well remembered, such as the loss of Admiral Sir Cloudesley Shovell and nearly 2,000 sailors on the Isles of Scilly one stormy night in 1707. Less well known is that many hundreds of people drowned every year as a result of shipwreck on the British coasts. Until the late 1800s large numbers of ships travelled up and down the east coast of England; many of these were colliers carrying coal from the northeast of England to London and other ports and harbours. In the 1840s three quarters of the sailing coasters were employed in carrying coal, and 8,000 colliers arrived in London each year with 2½ million tons of coal. These ships were always at the mercy of the weather, and not all were fully seaworthy, properly loaded or competently crewed. One author has said that during the second half of the 19th century 70 percent of the colliers were lost, together with 20 percent of the men who crewed them.<sup>1</sup>

Sailing ships could make little progress against head winds and so hundreds of ships would congregate in relatively sheltered places, such as Yarmouth Roads. When favourable conditions arrived, perhaps after many days, they would continue their journeys together. There are many references to these large fleets. On one day in August 1666 it was reported that nothing much had been seen in Southwold Bay – only a fleet of 400 colliers bound for London.<sup>2</sup> In 1710 the Mayor of London visited Harwich and recorded that he had seen 600-700 colliers lying at anchor.<sup>3</sup> In 1833 it was said that from Walton on the Naze one could have 'the pleasing sight of 200 to 300 sail of vessels daily'.<sup>4</sup> The *Norwich Mercury* told its readers in 1838 that some 1,500-2,000 vessels lay wind-bound in Yarmouth Roads. They left on 1st November followed by another 1,000 from southward so that 3,000 went through the Roads in five hours.<sup>5</sup> Two years later, in April and after a series of gales, some 500 ships streamed out of Harwich.<sup>6</sup> Blakeney also gets a mention in the records. In 1845 the Tidal Harbours Commission were told that before enclosure of the marshes and within the memory of the pilots present 140 coasting vessels had taken refuge in the port on one tide.<sup>7</sup>

In the absence of weather forecasts sailing ships off the coast of eastern England could be caught out by sudden storms from the north or north-east driving them towards a lee shore. Some foundered in open water while others were thrown ashore if their anchors would not hold. Many ships were broken up by the waves, sometimes very quickly, while others survived to be refloated later. The position of East Anglia, protruding into the North Sea, made it a particular hazard for coastal traffic and many shipwrecks occurred on the northeast coast of Norfolk.

There are numerous records of shipwrecks caused by storms. One in September 1671 destroyed 75 ships along the north Norfolk coast and it was said that 'the channels between Yarmouth and the Wash were so full of wreck that those at sea were forced to look sharp to keep clear of it'.<sup>8</sup> If Daniel Defoe is correct, 200 colliers left Yarmouth Roads in 1692 to continue northwards when they met a north-easterly storm. Some returned but others did not and 140 were driven on shore, as were another 60 ships coming southwards. Over 1,000 people were drowned.<sup>9</sup> Another report from 1695 says that 200 colliers bound for Newcastle and 50 other



vessels had been riding to anchor in a north-easterly storm but many were driven ashore and wrecked between Brancaster and Blakeney.<sup>10</sup> In October 1789 ten ships were forced ashore at Yarmouth, with 40 more between Yarmouth and Southwold, and 80 fishing vessels were lost between Yarmouth and Cromer.<sup>11</sup> On that occasion 120 bodies were found, and on 8th February 1807 another storm resulted in 144 bodies being washed up around Yarmouth.<sup>12</sup>

In 1833 the *Norwich Mercury* reported that following a storm on 31st August thirteen ships lay on the beaches between Blakeney and Cromer, and others had been lost at sea. Some of the ships were refloated, others became wrecks. The *Henry and Harriett* of Sunderland was ashore at Blakeney, and the *Spero*, laden with coal, was ashore at Cley.<sup>13</sup> These examples of the devastation caused by storms serve also as a reminder of the scale of shipbuilding needed to replace the losses.

### The First Lifeboats

Over the centuries storms, shipwreck, loss of life and the anguish of families directly affected must have seemed inevitable. Yet coastal communities did try to help those in need, even if the incentive was generated not only by the humanitarian impulse to save lives but also by the thought of profits from salvage. Helpers on-shore could do little other than pull exhausted sailors from the water, or collect their bodies, but local fishermen could do more if their boats were a match for severe weather conditions.

On the east coast of England the biggest losses of ships and their crews occurred between Mundesley and Aldeburgh, and it was on this stretch of coast that fishermen organised themselves into companies of 'beachmen' in order to take advantage of salvage opportunities and to save lives where they could. At the height of their activities there were thirty-one companies with c.1,500 beachmen.<sup>14</sup> Successful salvaging could add significantly to their income as rewards could be claimed if they brought in a ship that had been abandoned by its crew. This led to fierce competition among the companies to be the first on the scene, which in turn led to the development of the 'yawls', said to be the largest and fastest open sailing boat in northern Europe. Yawls were built for speed rather than strength and so could not go out in the worst weather when the need for saving life was at its greatest.

In the decades either side of 1800 the great loss of life from shipwrecks encouraged local philanthropists to support the building of boats specifically designed for life-saving. Except in the larger ports all these boats had to be crewed by local fishermen who had their own ideas about what kind of boat best suited their shoreline conditions. The designs eventually fell into two categories: broad-beamed, stable boats unlikely to capsize, and those designed to right themselves if they did overturn.

Much of the initial impetus came in the northeast of England (Northumberland and Durham) where, as a result of a disaster in 1789 and a subsequent competition, Henry Greathead was asked to build what was the first purpose-built lifeboat, reasonably called the 'Original'. One of his thirty one boats was taken to Lowestoft in 1801 but as the beachmen there didn't like it the boat was moved to Gorleston – where it fared no better. In 1806 Lionel Lukin, who had already adapted a Northumberland coble as a life boat for Bamburgh in 1787, came to Lowestoft where the beachmen told him

that what they wanted was an unsinkable boat based on the design of their yawls. The resulting boat was the 41ft *Frances Ann*, the first sailing lifeboat, which served for over forty years. The boat had water ballast and was known for sailing through the waves rather than over, sometimes having so much water in that it seemed almost submerged. This design was the forerunner of the 'Norfolk and Suffolk' type of lifeboat.<sup>15</sup> They were said to be unequalled as sailing boats but unsuitable for use anywhere else, except possibly on the Goodwin Sands.<sup>16</sup>

The Greathead boats were accepted by some fishing communities in Norfolk. At Cromer a Greathead boat provided in 1805 was accepted by the local fishermen and replaced by a similar oared boat from Shields in 1830.<sup>17</sup> In 1851 a national competition for a new lifeboat was won with a self-righting design by James Beeching of Yarmouth, a design later modified by James Peake. Many of these boats were built, including one provided for Cromer in 1860. Although it had a long life there the crews had reservations about it and in 1884 they reverted to a boat more akin to the Norfolk and Suffolk type, but with a 'North Country' curved keel. One was specially built for them by Beeching. The boat was non self-righting, 35ft 10in long, 10ft 6in in the beam, with a high bow and raking stern, 14 oars and a dipping lugsail. This boat, on station from 1884 to 1902, became known as the 'Cromer' type, but only two more were built: one for Wells and one for Blakeney.<sup>18</sup> The RNLI were not impressed by the design, and in lifeboat trials in Montrose in 1893 it was placed last of the seven competing types by the coxswain judges. It was said at the time that no more would be built as the 'Liverpool' was a similar design and much more popular around the coast.<sup>19</sup>

### Organisations

The first lifeboats were funded by philanthropists and local societies, and some of these continued to serve after the introduction of county-based and national organisations. At Sheringham the Upcher family provided in 1838 the *Augusta*, a boat based on the design of the local crab boats, which was to remain in service until 1894, long after the RNLI had provided a boat there. Some of the beachmen companies, including those at California and Gorleston, saw the advantages of the lifeboats over their yawls and so provided one of their own for use in salvage work during rough weather as well as for life-saving.

In November 1823, the first county association was formed: the Norfolk Association for Saving Lives of Shipwrecked Mariners, more usually called the Norfolk Shipwreck Association (NSA). They decided to provide additional lifeboats at five places, including Blakeney, and life-saving mortars at seven places, including the Hood on Blakeney Point. Action quickly followed, with the Blakeney and Hunstanton boats on station during 1824, and in 1830 Wells was given the boat which had been at Cromer. By 1845 the NSA had nine boats operating, although funds were declining and some of the boats were in poor shape; Blakeney and Hunstanton were both closed down before 1849. During the 1850s efficiency was also in short supply and the NSA was ready to give up its responsibilities.<sup>20</sup>

Fortunately a remedy was to hand. In 1824 the National Institution for Preservation of Life from Shipwreck had been set up, to be reformed and renamed the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in 1854.

It took over the assets (and liabilities) of the NSA in 1857. Very soon new boats were sent to seven Norfolk stations, with one for Blakeney following on in 1862. These boats were of the new self-righting type which were not readily accepted by some crews who still preferred the older heavy boats to the new 'rolypolies'.<sup>21</sup> Self-righting was achieved by having air tanks fore and aft and raised as high as possible, a heavy iron keel, and a narrow beam. At first the buoyancy was provided by barrels but later on air tanks were specially built and shaped to fit the relevant spaces. Boats with more stability and less likely to capsize had water ballast, at first in the bilges and later in tanks.

The RNLI continued to provide self-righters (unless stations rejected them) although by the end of the 1800s they did accept that their advantages were not as great as had been supposed. In 1897 they had a fleet of 287 boats, all self-righters bar 36, of which five were the 'Liverpool' type. By 1902 there were 60 non self-righters in a smaller fleet, and by 1908 the Liverpool class had grown to 32, including the Caroline at Blakeney.<sup>22</sup>

## Blakeney: The Early 1800s

### The First Lifeboat

The first purpose-built lifeboat at Blakeney was the one provided by the NSA in 1824. It may have been called the *Lewis Heurtwaller* but there seems to be no source for this other than local tradition, and 'Heurtwaller' (in whatever spelling) is a very elusive name. No description of the boat is available although it is likely to have been a relatively small boat powered by oars. Nor is there any record of its services apart from a rather inglorious event described in some detail by both Robert Malster and Jonathan Hooton.<sup>23</sup>

In 1830 the *Norwich Mercury* reported that the Blakeney lifeboat crew had refused to go to the aid of a vessel in distress. A violent gale lasting from the 10th to the 13th of January had overwhelmed the *William and Mary*, a collier of 300 tons from South Shields, and driven it onto the Point. There it had been smashed to pieces and most of the crew had drowned. The next ship in trouble was a sloop, the *Nancy* from Perth, anchored off the harbour mouth having lost mast, boom, bowsprit and all the sails. It was soon joined there by the steamer *City of Edinburgh* whose machinery had broken down; it had forty passengers on board as well as a valuable cargo. The captain tried to get the ship into the harbour under sail but found the conditions too difficult and so anchored offshore. On the 15th another sloop, the *Hope* of Bo'ness, tried to enter the harbour but grounded on the bar.

By then the storm was abating but 'despite the offer of a considerable sum of money the lifeboat crew refused to go out, considering it too dangerous'. Soon afterwards two smacks left Wells and eventually managed to take the *Nancy* into Wells harbour. The *City of Edinburgh* refused help as the weather seemed to be improving. The *Hope* still needed assistance so men from Blakeney set out to effect the rescue. The lifeboat crew, apparently shamed, then tried to reach the *City of Edinburgh* but failed. On their return those who had rescued the crew of the *Hope* then looked for the lifeboat in order to make another attempt to reach the steamer but, according to the *Mercury's* correspondent, they found that it had been 'removed from its usual place so

that they could not have the use of her'. The following day pilots from Blakeney did take the steamer into the harbour and released the passengers. The vessel was subsequently towed to London for repairs. This was not the end of the matter as the salvage crew then demanded £1,500 for the assistance they had provided – which the Steam Company resisted. The outcome remains unclear but there were allegations that the pilots' actions had displayed an unduly mercenary attitude. The *Mercury* subsequently asked that the NSA should investigate the conduct of the lifeboatmen and pilots at Blakeney.

The reporting of the incident suggests cowardice on the part of the Blakeney men, which has remained on the record ever since, but this ought not to be accepted automatically. There had long been some antipathy between Blakeney and Cley, lasting into the 20th century, and it was a Cley correspondent whose near libellous reports (though printed) were censured by the *Mercury*. Various questions arise. Was the lifeboat really manned by a crew separate from the pilots and fishermen of the harbour? How was the use of the boat prevented? It can hardly have been hidden from the eyes of all the local fishermen? Did they all, collectively, want to prevent the use of the lifeboat so that potential salvage money would not accrue to the NSA? The claim that was eventually made may seem exorbitant but it was an accepted practice that successful claimants were awarded a sum proportional to the total value of the vessel. In this case the *City of Edinburgh* was a large ship carrying a cargo said to be worth £50,000, although this might not have been known at the time of the incident. If a lifeboat was used a part of the proceeds had to go to the lifeboat owners.

It may also be true that the NSA lifeboat was not trusted to perform well in heavy weather. It was a Great-head boat from the North-East and, as Capt. Manby (inventor of the life-saving mortar) had pointed out in one of his pamphlets, it was not well suited to the Norfolk coast.<sup>24</sup> Although Cromer had accepted this design, most beach companies had not. It is not known what further services were (or were not) made in subsequent years by the Blakeney lifeboat. What is known is that the NSA was always short of funds to maintain their boats and they closed the Blakeney station some time between 1845 and 1849 leaving life-saving duties with the local fishermen.

Whatever the reality of events in 1830, bravery was shown in 1861 when eight men drowned while attempting a rescue in stormy weather – although it is likely that mercenary intentions were a contributory factor. On 9th February 1861 a barque, the *Favourite* of Banff, was driven onto the West Sands at Blakeney. It was bound from Hartlepool to Torre del Mar (Malaga, Spain) with a cargo of coal. Also in distress was a brigantine, the *Kingston* of Plymouth, on its way there also laden with coal. Sue Gresham has searched the newspapers of the time and her report appears on the Blakeney Harbour Association's website.

The newspaper accounts are not wholly consistent but it appeared that two boats left Blakeney Quay, one to rescue the crew of the *Favourite* and the second, *The Sailor's Friend*, to attend the *Kingston*. In a strong north-east wind the first lifeboat was seen to capsize on the bar and eight men were lost. Subsequently both ships became wrecks but not until their crews had been rescued. The names of the men drowned were listed in the press reports and, as a result of her extensive research, Sue Gresham's article has much information about them.<sup>25</sup> Two of them have tombstones in Blakeney churchyard.



### The City of Edinburgh

The 'City of Edinburgh' was one of the very first sea-going paddle-steamers, a wooden boat 135ft long and 26ft beam with paddle wheels 18ft in diameter. It was built in 1821 by Wigram and Green at Blackwall for the London and Edinburgh Steam Navigation Co. The 2 cylinder engine gave 80 hp and a speed of 8 knots, enabling the 450 mile journey between the two cities to be made in 58 hours – weather permitting. The service provided was appreciated but somewhat erratic as poor weather kept it in harbour when sailing schooners could leave, and maintenance periods could be long and unplanned.

In 1822 it helped to bring King George IV on a visit to Scotland, carrying 100 cases of plate and a throne. In January 1830 it was storm-bound at Blakeney and in August it was damaged in a collision at Shields. Soon afterwards it was disposed of and in 1832 arrived in Lisbon, and by 1834 it was in Cadiz. There it was chartered by the Spanish Government and used to transport a British Legion sent to Spain to fight the Carlists. In 1840 it was repaired and lengthened but the end came in March 1842 when it was wrecked at Ostend.

(Sources: John Bain, 'Employment of the Steamship in the Scottish East Coast Trades to 1850', PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 1996; [www.historic-shipping.co.uk](http://www.historic-shipping.co.uk).)

One commemorates John Johnson, 'pilot of this port who was drowned with seven others while going to the rescue of a ship wrecked on the West Sands' (Fig. 1). The other is in memory of John Easter whose body was not washed up until November (Fig. 2). It carries the words:

'I with seven others went our fellow men to save,  
A heavy sea upset our boat, we met a watery grave.'

Recently some extra information has come to light in an account of the disaster written as part of his life story by John Leslie, an apprentice aboard the *Favourite* in 1861.<sup>26</sup> His description makes clear that three boats, not two, had set out from Blakeney. The crew of the *Favourite* were taken off by two of the boats and as they sailed in they passed another boat capsized in the breakers. Eight men had been drowned while taking a shorter but more dangerous route to reach the wreck so that, by arriving first, they would be able to claim any money awarded for life saving. The crew of the *Favourite* spent several days in the locality so would have picked up local knowledge about the men who had been lost and about their intentions.

Blakeney harbour has often had two entrances, an east and a west, with one being the main entrance while the other silts up or else deepens on its way to becoming the main entrance. The capsized boat may have left the others to use a subsidiary western channel to reach the *Favourite* ashore further to the west. Figure 3 shows such a channel, the 'West Way', on a chart first published in 1838, one of the sheets in the first OS 1 inch to 1 mile series. (This particular edition carries geological information, with red dots on the sand hills indicating 'Blown Sand').

An earlier issue of the *Glaven Historian* introduced the 1861 disaster and highlighted the efforts made to



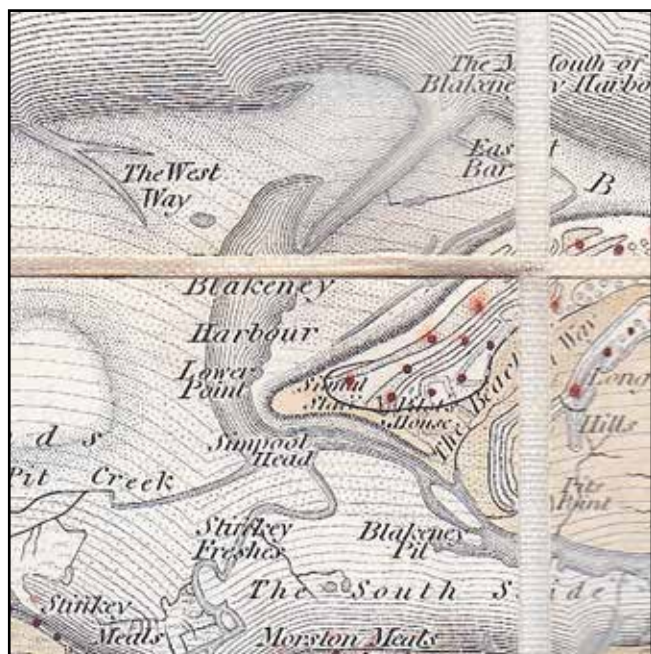
Fig. 1 The gravestone of John Johnson, drowned February 1861



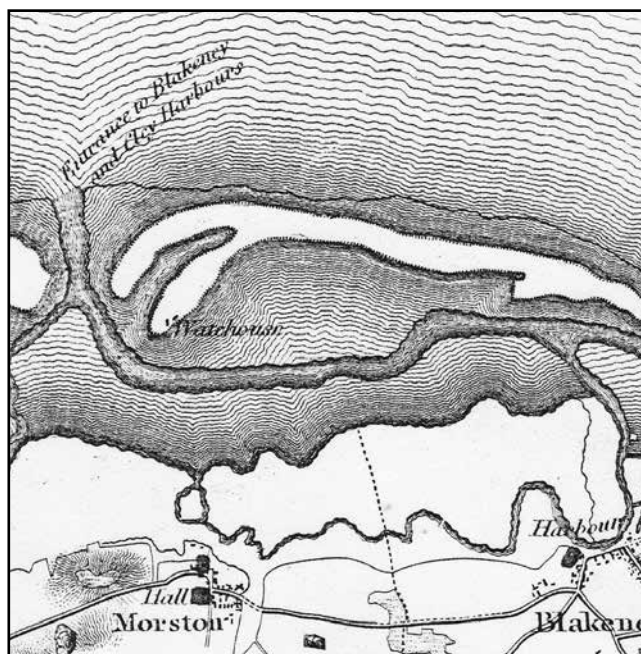
Fig. 2 The gravestone of John Easter, drowned February 1861

raise funds for the families of the eight men.<sup>27</sup> They were led by the Rev R Tillard, rector and Hon. Sec. of the Blakeney branch of the RNLI until his retirement in 1903. His letters to the *Norfolk Chronicle* and the *Norwich Gazette* drew attention to the penniless state of





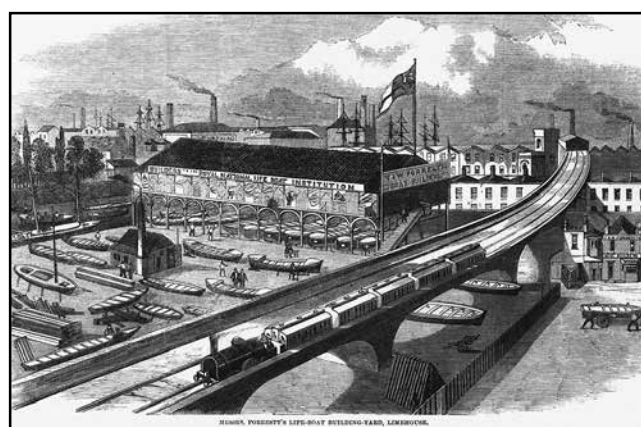
**Fig. 3 A shallow channel over the West Sands, OS map 1838**



**Fig. 4 The 'Watch House' on Bryant's map, 1826**



**Fig. 5 The Life Boat House on Palmer's map, 1835**



**Fig. 7 The Forresst Lifeboat Building Yard, Limehouse, 1860.**

the widows and the curtailed oyster fishing due to the severity of the winter. The final sum raised was £673, approaching £62,000 at today's values.<sup>28</sup>

The lifeboat supplied by the NSA in 1824 would have been kept under cover but the records of the lifeboat house are fragmentary. A painting from about 1810 shows a flagstaff with a pilots' house and another building very close to the site of the present lifeboat house.<sup>29</sup> These buildings are also shown on a county map by Bryant which he claimed was prepared from 'actual surveys' in 1824-26 and which he published in December 1826 (Fig. 4). The notation beside the buildings is 'Watchhouse' and presumably it was the pilots who were doing the watching.

The Tidal Harbours Commission of 1845 was supplied with Palmer's map of 1835 which had later (unspecified) additions from the Ordnance Survey. This, too, shows a signal staff and two buildings, the (marginally) larger one now labelled 'Life Boat House' (Fig.5). The Commissioner heard from Richard Mays, a Blakeney pilot, that it had been built about 26 years previously, which would

mean about 1819. This cannot be strictly true if it was the lifeboat house provided by the NSA as that would not have been built before 1824.<sup>30</sup>

A different interpretation is suggested by the OS map of 1838 (Fig. 6). The 'Pilot's House' is named on the end of the Point where Bryant had located it and where the last two lifeboat houses were subsequently built. This would be a relatively sheltered place for pilots who could wait until there was sufficient water over the bar before going out to bring ships in. Where the current Watch House stands, the OS locates the 'Preventive Watch Boat'. The Preventive Service had been set up in 1809 to prevent smuggling and it also had a responsibility to give assistance to shipwrecks. In 1822 it was amalgamated with two other anti-smuggling services, the Revenue cruisers at sea and the Riding Officers onshore, to form the Coastguard.

The OS map places the 'Life Boat House' on the Hood, and apparently on the seaward side on the sandhills. The shingle beach here is the very end of a coastline with essentially the same characteristics extending eastwards to Sheringham,





Year	Mon.	Day	Type	Vessel	Port	Oars/Sail	Assistance	No. saved	Crew	Helpers
1863	01	18	Schooner	<i>Pioneer</i>	London		Help declined		9	25
1863	05	19	Brig	<i>Faith</i>	Colchester		Put off		9	
1863	11	09	Schooner	<i>Ann Dering</i>	Ramsgate		Put off			
1863	12	17	Schooner	<i>Laurel</i>	Goole		Put off			

**Table 2 Brightwell Services recorded 1862 - 1863**

Year	Mon.	Day	Type	Vessel	Port	Oars/Sail	Assistance	No. saved	Crew	Helpers
1864	11	04	Chasse marée	<i>Eleanore</i>	Nantes			6	14	15
1864	11	23	Schooner	<i>Fernand</i>	St Malo			5	14	15
1865	02	17	Barque	<i>Amana</i>	Sunderland			18	13	15
1866	08	12	Pilot coble		Blakeney		Saved vessel	3	14	10
1867	01	01	Sloop	<i>Emma</i>	Portsmouth		Saved vessel	3	14	16
1867	11	26	Schooner	<i>Giroffe</i>	San V....		Put off – not reqd		14	
1868	04	08	Sloop	<i>Richard</i>	Goole			3	14	
1868	08	20	Fishing boat		Lowestoft		Found derelict		14	13
1869	10	19	Brig	<i>John &amp; Mary</i>	Shields			9	14	15
1869	10	20	Brig	<i>Ravensworth</i>	Hartlepool			6	14	15

**Table 3 The second Brightwell Services recorded 1863 - 1873**

performing a capsized drill and calling at the boat-house.<sup>31</sup>

According to the RNLI registers, the *Brightwell* was launched four times to attend vessels but did not save any lives (Table 2). Three of the launches were to schooners, the *Pioneer* of London, the *Ann Dering* of Ramsgate, and the *Laurel* of Goole. The *Ann Dering* sank off Brancaster just before the *Brightwell* could reach her but on searching the area nothing could be found.<sup>32</sup> The press noted that the site was at least fourteen miles from the lifeboat house at Blakeney. The RNLI records show that both the crew and the helpers ashore who launched the boat were paid for their services: for the *Pioneer* the nine crew members received 10s each and the twenty five helpers 2s 6d.

The second of the four launches was an eventful one. On 19th May 1863 the *Brightwell* set out to assist the brig *Faith* of Colchester, yet another ship to be wrecked on the West Sands in a northeast gale. She was laden with pig-iron and coal, under the master Henry Harvey, and had left Sunderland for Bordeaux. She struck first on the Race Shoal and then, becoming water-logged through failure of the pumps, eventually came ashore just to the east of Warham Hole (between Blakeney and Wells).<sup>33</sup> The lifeboat was towed out towards the wreck by a steam tug, the *Gem*, owned by Temple,<sup>34</sup> but a heavy sea broke several of the oars and the next one capsized the boat. It righted itself enabling six of the crew to clamber aboard, while the tug rescued the other two, kept afloat by their cork jackets. The crew of the *Faith* were later 'saved at much risk by a Blakeney large double-banked boat'.<sup>35</sup> Or, according to the *Lifeboat Magazine*, by two boats taking off the ten man crew for which they were awarded £12.<sup>36</sup> Or, according to the *Chelmsford Chronicle*, by a fishing yawl for which the RNLI awarded the crew £10. The laconic comment recorded by the Station in June was 'Lifeboat capsized. Not considered large enough for the locality. New one ordered to be sent forthwith'.

### The second Brightwell

The RNLI did send a replacement boat forthwith, in the following year 1864. Miss Brightwell contributed £197 for another self-righting boat from the Forrests boatyard, 36ft 4in long, 8ft 1in beam, with twelve oars (Fig. 8). The name *Brightwell* was retained.<sup>37</sup> The new boat was carried from London to Wells by the Great Eastern Railway at no charge. It was on station till 1873, the RNLI records showing that she was launched ten times, saving a total of 53 lives from eight of those occasions (Table 3 and Fig. 9).<sup>38</sup>

The RNLI records are usually terse and do not fully reflect the exertions that must have been necessary in rowing the boat long distances in gale-force winds and rough seas. An exception is made for the *Eleanor*, a French chasse-marée of Nantes, which was driven onto the West Sands in stormy weather in November 1864. An hour's pull brought the *Brightwell* up to the *Eleanor* by then rolling heavily with the seas breaking over her, and the crew exhausted and secured only by an oar lashed in the rigging. After taking off the six crew members the coxswain, William Hooke, reported that the new lifeboat had 'behaved admirably in sailing before the wind'. Enlarging on this the Rev. R Tillard, the Hon Sec. of the Blakeney RNLI branch, tells of the crew speaking very highly of the boat's ability to sail before the wind with a heavy sea following. She 'behaved beautifully in returning under canvas and in pulling out against wind and tide with a heavy beam sea'.<sup>39</sup>

On 20th February 1865 the lifeboat went to the aid of the barque *Amana* of Sunderland, taking coal to Savona, Italy, which was totally wrecked. Her crew of thirteen were taken off, together with another five men who had taken their own boat out but had been unable to reach the shore again. The *Norwich Mercury* provides extra detail, reporting that the lifeboat was rowed up Cley Channel, hauled manually over the beach on roller skids and launched again within a short distance of the wreck.<sup>40</sup>

In April 1868 the lifeboat went to the aid of the sloop *Richard* of Goole, laden with wheat, and eventually took three men off her bowsprit. The *Norfolk News* described





Fig. 8 The second Brightwell posed for action

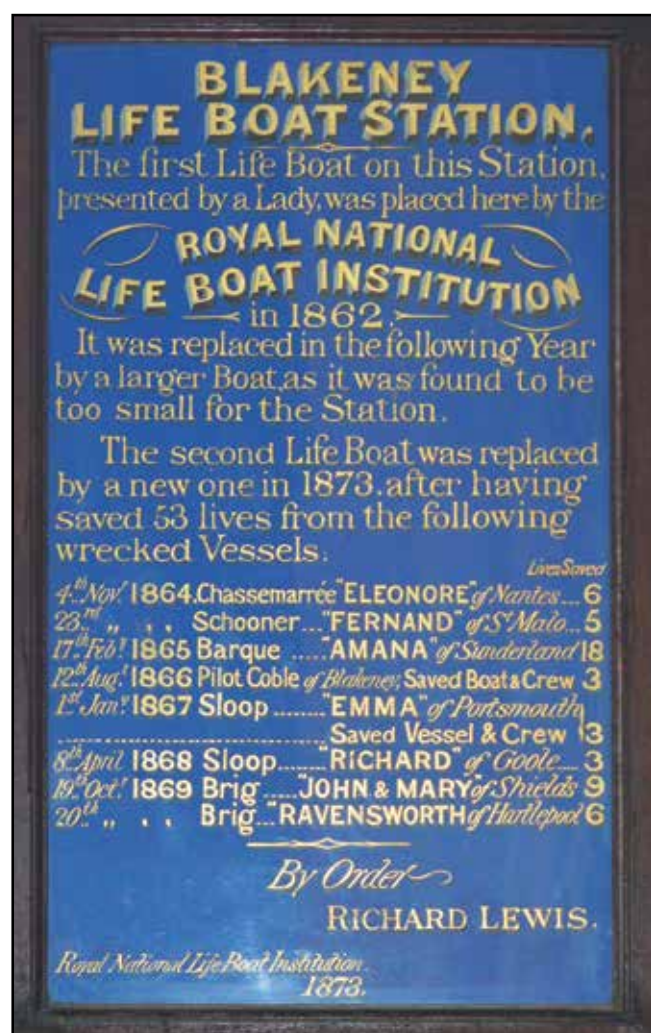


Fig. 9 The service record of the second Brightwell in the church

the lifeboat being driven back and filling numerous times before reaching the sloop, the men speaking highly of their boat 'which emptied itself as quickly as the sea filled her'.<sup>41</sup> Four months later they rowed four miles to the west in heavy rain only to find a fishing boat from Lowestoft wrecked and abandoned.

The West Sands continued to claim victims, two more on successive days in October 1869. On 19th October the

brig *John and Mary* of Shields, 260 tons, from Le Havre in ballast, was driven ashore in a terrific northerly gale and very heavy seas. The lifeboat was launched and took off eight men and a boy. At daylight on the following morning another ship lay on her beam ends, the brig *Ravenworth* of Hartlepool, 177 tons. She was a total wreck with bows and quarter stove in and her two boats washed away. The *Brightwell* was rowed out again and 'with some difficulty' took off the crew of six, exhausted and clinging to the rigging. In more recent times such an action might have been rewarded in some way but in the 19th century it was probably a typical rescue.

### Hettie

The RNLI records show that as the coxswain and crew of the *Brightwell* had 'repeatedly urged that it was not suitable to the requirements of the station, it not having sufficient beam, and having stated that they had consequently lost confidence in this boat, it has been removed from Blakeney'. The replacement was the *Hettie*, built by Woolfe & Son at Shadwell on the Thames. It was a self-righting design, 37ft long with a beam of 9ft 5in, powered by twelve oars. Costing £412 to build it was the gift of Mr G Firth, a wealthy stuff merchant in Bradford. She was towed to Blakeney free of charge by the steamer *Mack Diamond* belonging to Messrs Fenwick & Co, and the old boat was given a free rail trip from Wells back to London.

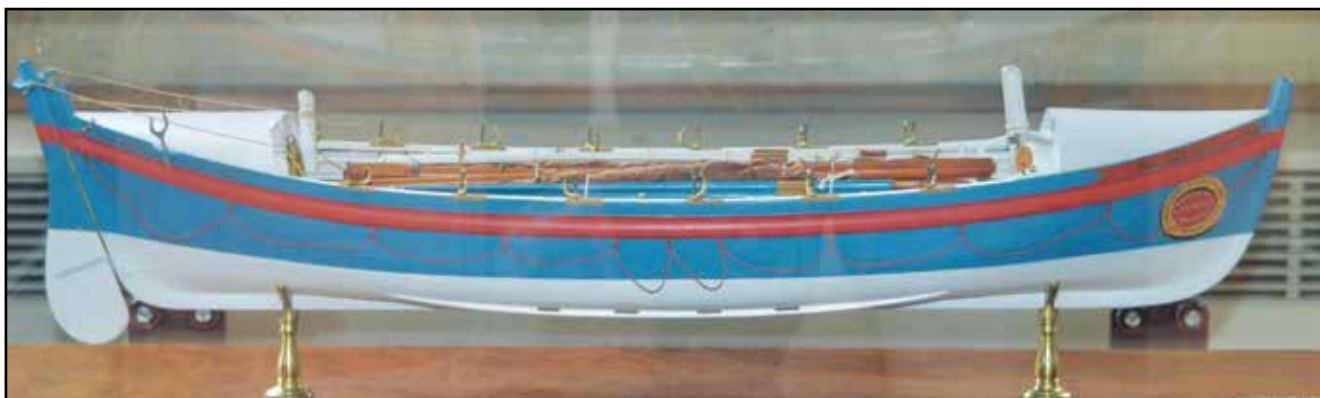
The *Hettie* was on station at Blakeney from 1873 till 1891 and, according to some sources, was launched four times and saved twelve lives. Only two of those launches are recorded on the board that hangs in Blakeney church (Fig. 10). On 21st February 1877 the lifeboat had responded to distress signals from the ketch *Aid* of Hull, bound from Barton to London. The *Hettie* had to be dragged a considerable distance over the sand but could not get over the bar until 4 o'clock the following morning when four crew members were taken off. The steam tug from Wells towed the *Aid* into Wells harbour. In November 1885 eight people were rescued from *HMS Beaver*. The *Hettie* had been launched at about 10 pm in answer to signal rockets and had found the ship stranded on the West Sands. She remained by the vessel all night and took eight of the crew ashore in the morning, leaving the rest of the crew to be taken off by another boat.<sup>42</sup>

Recently a model of the *Hettie* was presented to Blakeney by the late grand-daughter of George Firth, who had been given it by the RNLI in recognition of his gift (Fig. 11). It is a fine model with masts and furled



Year	Mon.	Day	Type	Vessel	Port	Oars/Sail	Assistance	No. saved	Crew	Helpers
1877	02	21	Ketch	<i>Aid</i>	Hull			4		
1885	11	25	HMS	<i>Beaver</i>				8		

**Table 4 Hettie Services recorded 1873 - 1891**



**Fig. 11 Model of the Hettie in the church**



**Fig. 10 The service record of the Hettie in the church**

sails lying in the boat as well as oars. Passed originally to the BAHS it is now in the church, complementing other RNLI records there.<sup>43</sup>

When the RNLI took over from the NSA and provided a boat for Blakeney in 1862, it also built a new lifeboat house, the former one having fallen into decay. In 1862 Lord Calthorpe, then owner of Blakeney

Point, gave £100 towards its construction. According to one author it was not only a new building that was needed: a new location was also required 'after the sea encroached on the original site making it dangerous'.<sup>44</sup> This statement is compatible with the first lifeboat house having been built on the Hood rather than inside the harbour. The new house was a large timber shed, built necessarily above high tide level thereby requiring the lifeboat to be pulled across the dunes. By 1867 the new house was already said to be 'inadequate' by an RNLI inspector but a project to replace it was put on hold.

#### **Zaccheus Burroughes**

The next lifeboat to arrive at Blakeney was the *Zaccheus Burroughes*, the legacy of Mrs E Burroughes of South Norwood, who named the boat after her late husband. It was built by Beeching at Yarmouth to the 'Cromer' design, 35ft in length, beam 10ft, with sails and fourteen oars double-banked. As a non self-righting boat, the dimensions were significantly different from those of the second *Brightwell*, being 1ft shorter and 2ft wider. Stationed at Blakeney from 1891 to 1908, it was launched at least nine times although only three of those are recorded on the board in the church, and only one launch resulted in lives saved (Table 5 and Fig. 12). Even then, the wording is that two people were 'landed', so perhaps the service was not unduly onerous.

The RNLI records always note the weather conditions when the lifeboat crews were called out. One of the worst storms was in March 1898 when the wind was from the northeast: 'Heavy gale. Tremendous sea. Thick snow squalls.' The crew and helpers were held 'in readiness' when a steamer was reported to be drifting close to the beach, but the lifeboat was not sent out. There were other occasions when the crew and helpers were assembled and waited but were not needed, and it is these events which are not recorded on the church board. Conversely, the assistance given to the sloop *Pioneer* when two people were landed is not listed in the RNLI records in their HQ at Poole.



Year	Mon.	Day	Type	Vessel	Port	Oars/Sail	Assistance	No. saved	Crew	Helpers
1896	04	11	Smack	<i>John &amp; Anne</i>	Thornham		Crew assembled		17	12
1898	03	26	SS				Crew ready		17	20
1899	01	03	SS				Crew assembled		17	12
1902	10	21	Ketch	<i>Annie</i>	Grimsby		Assisted to save			
1903	09	11	SS			Sails	No service		16	14
1903	10	02	Unknown				Crew assembled		14	14
1903	10	19	Ketch	<i>Reaper</i>	Blakeney	Both	Assisted		18	08
1903	11	22	Ketch	<i>Spy</i>	Leith		Crew assembled		17	18
1908	11	25	Sloop	<i>Pioneer</i>	Lynn			(2)		

**Table 5** Zaccheus Burroughes Services recorded 1891 - 1908

In October 1903 assistance was given to the ketch *Reaper* of Blakeney in a strong southerly breeze. On that occasion the lifeboat used sails and oars, and sails were also used in attending a steamer off Cley when no assistance was needed. In October 1902 the aid given to the ketch *Annie* of Grimsby was described as a 'salvage case'. She was a billyboy of 100 tons taking coal to Gravesend and had gone aground after the skipper had 'miscalculated his course'. Having waited overnight he decided to throw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship which was then able to reach Blakeney Quay with the lifeboat in attendance. According to the press report the men and boys of Blakeney then searched earnestly for the coal which they brought back in 'boats of all sizes and descriptions'.<sup>45</sup>

The crew and helpers were paid whether or not the lifeboat put to sea. The rates varied, perhaps in accordance with the length of time they were on duty. Crew members were paid between 3s and 6s for assembling, 10s for going to the steamer off Cley, and 15s for attending the *Reaper*. The helpers received between 2s and 6s. A signalman was paid at the same rate as the helpers, as was a telephone man from October 1903 onwards. It is noticeable that for salvaging the *Anne* nobody received anything from the RNLI. In 1896 William Hooke, who had been the coxswain for all the RNLI boats, retired after 35 years service and was rewarded with the RNLI's silver medal, a certificate and £35. His successor as coxswain was George Long.

In 1898 a new lifeboat house was finally built at a cost of £545 – on the site of the old one which was moved further back and sold off to a private owner (Fig. 14). It was becoming increasingly difficult to drag the lifeboat over the sand dunes and this was partially rectified by installing a strong post (shown on the OS map of 1906) to help in lowering the boat from the top of the dunes into the water. This did not solve the problem and in the early 1920s the RNLI were persuaded to donate the building to the National Trust which had acquired the Point in 1912. From this time onwards the lifeboat was kept afloat and it was no longer necessary to have large numbers of people to help launch it (Fig. 13).<sup>46</sup>

### Caroline

The fifth and last lifeboat provided by the RNLI, in 1908, was the *Caroline*, the legacy of Miss Caroline Everard of Laverstock Hall, Salisbury. She was built by Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company at Blackwall, London, at a cost of £1,202. Her design conformed to the non self-righting 'Liverpool' class of boats, with dimensions 38ft in length and 10ft 9in beam. She carried



**Fig. 12** The service records of the Hettie, Zaccheus Burroughes and the Caroline in the church

fourteen oars as well as two standing lugsails and a jib, and two drop-keels. After 37 years service, 19 recorded calls to action and 36 lives saved, she was retired in 1935 and the station closed down.

Tony Faulkner's notes contain a description of the boat. The hull was built of double diagonal mahogany boarding on oak with a layer of calico, a thin but very tough canvas, between the two layers. This type of construction gives the hull great strength and resilience, capable of withstanding a severe amount of bumping without being easily holed. Around the outside of the hull was a large projecting rubbing strake of cork on timber framing and covered with canvas. In earlier years the RNLI had been critical of this feature, believing that a heavy sea on top of it could capsize the boat.

The *Caroline* had two sealed tanks for water ballast



**Fig. 13 (top) Hauling the lifeboat up to the lifeboat house**

**Fig. 14 (above) The new lifeboat house with the old one behind it**

in the bilges, each one containing two tons of water when full, and which would be filled at the beginning of any rescue operation. This ballast was necessary to give the boat stability, enabling her to cut through the waves rather than being tossed around by them. Most of the remaining space beneath the deck and at the bow and stern was filled with air cases, 124 in total and each one individually shaped for its position. They were made of thin pine boarding covered in waterproof canvas with brass-reinforced corners. These

were necessary to give buoyancy should the boat be holed or if seas broke over the boat and filled her. The deck on which the crew stood was high enough to be self-draining through hinged scuppers in the side of the boat at deck level. These pivoted outwards to allow water to wash out with the roll of the vessel but were shut when she rolled in the opposite direction. By this means most of the water coming aboard would flow out again fairly quickly.

According to RNLI records currently available, the



Year	Mon.	Day	Type	Vessel	Port	Oars/Sail	Assistance	No. saved	Crew	Helpers
1914	10	03	SS	<i>Argentum</i>	Newcastle	Both	Helped save vessel			
1914	11	15	SS	<i>Vera</i>	Newcastle	Both				
1914	12	06	Unknown				Crew assembled		17	06
1917	09	30	SS	<i>Wearsider</i>		Both	Stood by		17	07
1918	01	07	SS	<i>General Havelock</i>	Newcastle	Both		16	17	01
1918	01	08	Tug	<i>Joffre</i>		Both		14	17	01
1918	03	05	Unknown				Crew assembled		17	
1918	04	05	2 ketches	<i>La Boer/Madeline</i>	Boulogne	Both	No service		16	
1918	04	18	SS	<i>Alice Taylor</i>	Dundee	Oars	No service		19	
1918	09	27	Barge	<i>Worry Not</i>	Littlehampton	Both	No service		17	02
1918	10	13	Barge	<i>Fern</i>	Hull	Both	No service		18	02
1918	12	26	Unknown			Both	No service		17	02
1919	01	14	Adm. Tug	<i>Central No. 2</i>			Crew assembled		16	
1919	07	03	SS	<i>Dove</i>	Hull		Crew assembled		17	02
1919	10	10	SS	<i>Urd</i>	Swansea			4	17	04
1922	02	14	Auxil. ship	<i>Argosy Lemal</i>	Newcastle	Both	Stood by			
1923	04	12	Smack	<i>Telegraph</i>	Boston	Both	Stood by		17	02
1923	12	19	Barge	<i>Briton</i>	London	Both	Rescued	2	16	17
1924	07	26	SS	<i>Hilderthorpe</i>	Hull	Sails	Assisted vessel			

**Table 6 Caroline Services recorded 1908 - 1935**

Caroline was not called out during her first six years at Blakeney – which would be surprising even though the numbers of ships passing would be far smaller than in earlier years. The days of sail were almost over and steam engines were more reliable. Newspaper accounts, though, tell a different story. In August 1909, for example, the ketch *Sir John Colomb* ran ashore at the Watch House in heavy weather. The *Caroline* went to her assistance but was not needed. The cargo of 'iron, nets, warp and herring' was taken out but the ketch could not be refloated and was expected to become a total wreck. A year later the steamship *Heathfield* sank off Kelling after two crew members had reached the shore. The *Caroline* was called out and 'cruised for a long time' but could find no-one else.<sup>47</sup>

The RNLI records begin in 1914 when three events are listed (Table 6). In October the lifeboat went to the assistance of the SS *Argentum* of Newcastle bound for Faversham with a cargo of coal. She was stranded on the West Sands and the lifeboat attended for eleven hours using sail and oars. This was to turn into a salvage case as, with the lifeboat still in attendance, the cargo was jettisoned and the ship was refloated two days later. In November there was an initial call to the SS *Vera* which needed no action and then in December the seventeen crew members and four helpers assembled for four hours although again they were not called out. For this the crew were paid 7s, the helpers, signalman and telephone man 5s. As in 1902, nothing was paid for helping with the salvage case.

The next incident did not involve the lifeboat at all. In February 1916 the SS *Hjordis*, with a cargo of coal for Calais, grounded on the bar in a storm and became a total wreck – the remains lie there still. Of the eleven-man crew only one survived. An account of the ship-wreck appears in a previous issue of this journal.<sup>48</sup> For reasons not entirely clear the *Caroline* was not called out. Instead the old *Hettie*, then in private ownership, was rowed down from Blakeney only to find that the crew had already abandoned the ship. In the RNLI records available in the History Centre a note

refers to this event: 'Old lifeboat launched. No service.' (There follows an indication that further information can be found in another RNLI book but this cannot be accessed at present.)

The next service of the *Caroline* was a double one on the 7th and 8th January 1918 resulting in bringing 30 people to safety. The ships in trouble were the SS *General Havelock* of Newcastle and *HM Tug Joffre* which had been sent to tow the steamer off the beach. *Eastern Daily Press* reports of 9th and 10th January described the efforts of the lifeboat crew on both nights, adding that the Cley Lifesaving Company had also turned out in weather they considered the worst in their 40 years existence.

Tony Faulkner's notes draw on these press reports and add a little more detail. They read as follows.

The events started on the early hours of Monday morning 7th January when the alarm was given that a vessel was in distress. She had run aground on the sands between Wells and Blakeney and flares were seen in Wells about 3 am. The Wells and Blakeney lifeboats were both launched and made for the position, the Wells boat arriving first but leaving after being told that no help was needed. The *Caroline* however stood by the stricken vessel and as the hours passed it became apparent that both the vessel and the lifeboat were in increasing danger. The captain of the steamer decided to abandon ship and the crew of 16 transferred to the lifeboat which headed for home. Conditions by then were very bad and the lifeboat at times was nearly submerged by the breaking seas, but after several hours' hard work the quay was reached and the stranded mariners taken to the White Horse Hotel to recover.'

'That same evening there was an exceptionally hard frost and with a gale still blowing from the north-west it began to snow heavily. In the early hours of Tuesday morning distress signals were seen again and the *Caroline* headed out once more, the crew still weary from the previous day's long duty. By then conditions were atrocious with a blizzard and so cold that the salt



**Fig. 15** *The Caroline at the carnsier in her early days*

spray froze where it landed in the boat. Fortunately they were able to sail and after a bitter journey found that a tug had grounded on the sands. The crew of 14 were safely transferred to the lifeboat and coxswain George Long turned for home. Their difficulties were not over, however, as the channel near the quay was frozen over and the ice had to be broken before the men could be landed. The *Caroline* returned coated with a solid mass of ice from the spray that had frozen on her, and Stratton Long, who was nine at the time, remembered his father (Charlie Long, the lifeboat's bowman and subsequent coxswain) removing his sou'wester in the kitchen and a complete hat formed of ice on the outside separating from it and standing whole on the kitchen table.'

In their usual fashion, the RNLI records carry the barest of details. The weather conditions on the first occasion were 'NWN-NNW Moderate gale, rough sea, snow' and for the second 'North, strong gale, very heavy sea, snow'. The lifeboat was launched at 5.30 am on Monday and again on Tuesday at 4.30 am and appears to have returned soon after midday on each occasion. For the second service the RNLI showed their appreciation by awarding the crew an 'additional monetary reward in view of their arduous service', the extra sum being 10s per man to add to their initial 45s.<sup>49</sup> They also received 22s 6d for the first call-out.

There is an extra dimension to this story which Pam Peake has described in a BAHS *Newsletter*.<sup>50</sup> The crew of the *Caroline* had an average age of 55. Six of them were 60 or over, the oldest 68, their presence being necessary because younger men were away on war service. The names and ages of the crew are recorded on a board hanging in Blakeney church. Notable is the surname Long: George the coxswain with sons Charles and William, and brothers James and William. William Starling was a brother-in-law, and

so too was signalman Francis Kerrison, who is not named on the board. Two years later George Long retired after twenty four years as coxswain, having been 2nd coxswain for sixteen years before that, and was awarded a framed certificate and a pension by the RNLI. Charles Long was elected to take his place as coxswain. A portrait of George hangs in the church, together with the retirement certificate given to Charles.

Tony Faulkner's notes continue with a description of rescues from two more vessels, as recorded on the church board (Fig. 12). On 19th October 1919 the *Caroline* attended the steamship *Urd* which had run into trouble off Wells. She had been compelled to anchor in the gale that was blowing and had then sprung a leak which flooded her stokehole. The Wells lifeboat *Baltic* was launched and took off six crew, the captain and others refusing to leave the vessel but arranging to fire a rocket if further assistance was needed. At 8 am the following morning a rocket was fired and the steamer could be seen driving eastwards towards Blakeney Point. The *Caroline* went to her assistance and returned to the Quay about 3.30 pm with the four remaining members of the crew, the steamer having been abandoned.

The last rescue recorded on the church board was of the barge *Briton* on 19th December 1923. The barge, loaded with coal and bound from Boston to Sandwich, had grounded on the West Sands, driven there by a northerly gale. The *Caroline* set out about 9 pm into the teeth of the gale and it took five hours' arduous rowing to reach the scene. A contemporary newspaper account, with some added detail by Stratton Long, George's grandson, makes vivid reading. The lifeboat was unable at first to reach the vessel because of the difficulty of making sufficient way against the sea, wind and tide, so the coxswain headed the boat further off to the east until she could





**Fig. 16** *The Caroline at ease in 1934* (Mirrorpix/Getty)

lay across under sail. When they reached the wreck the hull was under water with only the mast showing. The crew of two were in the rigging and to reach them the coxswain had to bump the lifeboat over the submerged hull, with some resulting damage. Her skipper was able to jump into the lifeboat but the mate, with an injured foot, had to be rescued with a line. The return trip to the Quay, reached at 3.30 the following morning, took only 35 minutes under sail.

Local records for the *Caroline* cease after 1924 but she did go out again on occasions. On 11th August 1927 Blakeney organised a 'lifeboat day' when many people turned out to hear speeches delivered from the *Caroline*, parked in the street, by various figures in authority, including the Earl of Leicester, the Rev. Lee-Elliott, chairman of the local committee, and Mr S Baker, the Hon. Sec. of the Branch. Mr Baker described the last service of the *Caroline* when she had gone out into the 'blackest darkness' and a NW gale to search for five hours before finding the boat in distress and taking off two men 'just in time'. This appears be an account of the rescue in 1923.

On 22nd February 1932, she was launched to investigate a flare but found the tide had ebbed so far that she could not get over the bar, nor return to her moorings, so had to wait there until early morning. Meanwhile the Wells lifeboat had searched the area but found nothing. The *Caroline* crew also received recompense for assembling in December 1933 but

the barge *Fred Everard* that had been in difficulties managed to reach safety without needing help. Each time the crew members assembled they received a gratuity, varying between 3s and 15s, with sometimes the signalman and telephone man present and sometimes not.

The records (from 1906 onwards) of William Starling, a Blakeney builder and boatbuilder, have frequent references to repairing the lifeboat, beginning with an oak post in 1909. Most seem to relate to essential maintenance, the most expensive and frequent work entailed extracting the air tanks, making them watertight and covering them with new calico when necessary.

At the end of her active service the *Caroline* was converted by Kenneth Newton of Cley into a cruiser and renamed *Blakeney Dawn*.<sup>51</sup> The *Lifeboat Magazine* records that a boat of this name was towed into Mumbles in July 1962 by the lifeboat there after engine trouble.<sup>52</sup>

## Closure

Motor lifeboats arrived on the north Norfolk coast in 1936 when they were supplied to Wells and Sheringham. Such boats were not needed at both Wells and Blakeney, and with the Wells crew having easier access to their lifeboat house and to the sea, it was the Blakeney station that was closed in 1935.

When the station closed the regular crew all received

certificates of service. Charles Long had been thirteen years a crew member, nine years as bowman and fourteen years as the coxswain. William Bishop had been sixteen years in the crew and then fourteen years as second coxswain, while Matthew Long had been twenty years a crew member and fourteen years bowman. The others, and their length of service, were:

William Baines 40, William E Baines 35, Edward Bambridge 23, Ellis Bishop 10, Ernest Bishop 18, Fred Long 25, Fred Long 15, George Long 12, Samuel Long 21, William Long senior 35, William Long junior 15, and Fred Westcott 10.<sup>53</sup>

In total five RNLI lifeboats served at Blakeney for 73 years and saved 101 lives. Most rescues had to be made in weather severe enough to disable much larger boats and, although sails could sometimes be used, launching and making progress against on-shore winds needed the use of oars. Over the years lifeboats were continually improved in order to give better service. Many qualities were also required of the crews, especially knowledge of the sea and local conditions, physical strength, determination, and courage.

## Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Tony Faulkner for donating his notes to the History Centre and to Dick Kelham for help in preparing this article.

The article was written entirely during the period of coronavirus lockdown which prevented access to libraries and the Norfolk Record Office, and it was a particular disappointment to forego additional RNLI records held at their HQ where staff were willing to provide information but unable to do so.

## Notes

- 1 Peake (1) quoting Tikus.
- 2 Benham p. 62.
- 3 Benham p. 63.
- 4 Benham p. 42.
- 5 Higgins p. 15
- 6 Benham p. 82.
- 7 Hooton p. 235.
- 8 Benstead p. 26.
- 9 Defoe p. 94.
- 10 Unsourced newspaper cutting quoting memorandum in Docking church.
- 11 Malster p. 18.
- 12 Benham p. 79.
- 13 Tonkin pp. 244-6.
- 14 Higgins p. 2.
- 15 Malster pp. 161-2; Harmer p. 23; Leach p. 8.
- 16 Harmer p. 44.
- 17 Leach p. 66.
- 18 Malster p. 160 and p. 84; Leach p. 17.
- 19 *Lifeboat Magazine*, Vol. 18, Issue 205, RNLI.
- 20 Malster p. 139
- 21 Malster p. 88.
- 22 Malster p. 91; Malster p. 173.
- 23 Malster pp. 84-5; Hooton pp. 276-7.
- 24 Malster p. 84.
- 25 Gresham; Peake (1) p. 71.
- 26 Gresham. Additional information acquired after the publication of her article.
- 27 Wright (1) pp. 50-2.
- 28 Gresham p. 6.
- 29 Peake (1) quoting from Oliver's report in NNNs, Vol.XI, Part IV, 1922-23.
- 30 Hooton p. 276.
- 31 Gresham p. 31 quoting the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the *Norfolk Chronicle* of 11th October 1862.
- 32 *The Morning Post* 13th November 1863.
- 33 *Norwich Mercury* 23rd May 1863.
- 34 Peake (1) p. 72.
- 35 Letter to Tony Faulkner from the RNLI dated 7th March 1984 (BAHS History Centre).



- 36 *Lifeboat Magazine*, Vol. 5, Issue 50, RNLI.
- 37 Malster p. 274.
- 38 Hooton p. 279.
- 39 *Lifeboat Magazine*, Vol. 5, Issue 57, RNLI; *Norwich Mercury* 9th November 1864.
- 40 *Norwich Mercury* 22nd February 1865.
- 41 *Norfolk News* 12th April 1868.
- 42 *Lifeboat Magazine*, Vol. 13, Issue 139, RNLI.
- 43 Peake (3).
- 44 Leach p. 62.
- 45 *Eastern Daily Press* 24th October 1902.
- 46 Eales p. 80.
- 47 *Eastern Evening News* 119th August 1909; *Framlingham Weekly News* 22nd October 1910.
- 48 Wright (2) pp. 65-9.
- 49 *Lifeboat Magazine* Vol. 23, Issue 265, RNLI.
- 50 Peake (3).
- 51 Hooton, p. 280.
- 52 *Lifeboat Magazine* Vol. 37, Issue 402, RNLI.
- 53 *Lifeboat Magazine* Vol. 29 Issue 322, RNLI.

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| Pam Peake (2)   | The Blakeney Lifeboat <i>Hettie</i> , BAHS Newsletter No. 35, July 2013.  |
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| John Wright (2) | The Wreck of the <i>Hjordis</i> , <i>The Glaven Historian</i> No. 15, 2017.   |

# The Cley 1914-1918 War Project

Richard Jefferson

## Abstract.

This article, the outcome of a project undertaken for the 100th anniversary of the First World War by the author, lists those servicemen connected with Cley who died in the First World War, adding ten more names to the 29 men listed on the War Memorial in St Margaret's Church. The article also tells the often tragic stories of some of these men.



## Introduction

Having been at the Remembrance Day service in St Margaret's Church, Cley for many of the last forty years, and heard the twenty-nine names on the war memorial in the Lady Chapel read out, it is not surprising that I was drawn towards doing something when the centenary of the start of the 1914-1918 War came near. My intentions were firmly in place a year in advance, in August 2013, when I organised a successful exhibition in the village hall of Cley material from the past. Mark Reading, a descendant of the three Barnes brothers killed in the war, had supplied me with family information and photographs which were on display.

Looking back, now that the centenary of the end of the war is well behind us, it is a regret that I did not manage to track down more personal family information than I did. Lack of time and commitment on my part are to blame. Requests in the *Glaven Valley Newsletter* (GVN) and elsewhere were made, but no further families came forward.

In the *Glaven Historian* 2 (June 1999), Mary Ferrous-sat's 'Norfolk War Memorials Project 1914-1918: Part II' article appeared. She had thirty-seven Cley names listed – the twenty-nine on the War Memorial in St Margaret's (Fig. 1), and eight more, none of whom are commemorated on the memorial, but with strong Cley connections. Add two more, soldiers who died in Cley, had funeral services

**Figs. 1a, 1b and 1c. First World War memorial in St Margaret's, Cley with views of the panels of names (overleaf)**

in St Margaret's, and were buried with Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) headstones by the huts in the north-west corner of the churchyard. Therefore, in the end, I found myself dealing with thirty-nine names to research for my project.

It was easy for confusion to reign over some of the people I was dealing with. Take the two Gibbs brothers. The elder was christened in Cley Church in 1886 'Ernest William'. In the *Norfolk Chronicle* article after his death he was 'William Ernest'. On the memorial in St Margaret's he is 'Ernest William Emery'. The younger brother is even more confusing. He was christened 'Robert William'. In the army he was registered as 'Bertie E.' The CWGC website has him as 'B.E. Gibbs', and on the memorial in St Margaret's he is 'Robert William Emery'. The Roll of Honour website, not surprisingly because of the confusion, had down the wrong man, a Norfolk regiment soldier. The *Norfolk Chronicle* for 11th May 1917 put things right: *Mr and Mrs William E. Gibbs, Cley-next-the-Sea, have been informed by the Rev. A. Fenn, Rector of Stibbard, and chaplain of the forces, that their fourth son, Robert William Emery Gibbs has died of wounds. 'Bertie' Gibbs was an old Scout and volunteered for service in the City of London Cyclist Corps (11316 ACC), being attached to the East Yorks. Regt.*





I am reasonably confident that I have the details on the spread sheet (p. 75) correct. Mary Ferroussat had no information for **Frederick (William) Brett**, and ages and places of birth were incomplete in a number of instances. The Roll of Honour website had several people down as 'possibly' or 'probably' and these have been corrected.

This was a project where my research could be built up over the four years. All I needed to do was make sure that Lorraine, the editor of the GVN, received my copy in time for my entry to be in one hundred years to the month when someone died. So I did not need to worry about 1918 entries when we were in 2015.

## Sources

The starting point was the memorial in the Lady Chapel of St Margaret's, Mary Ferroussat's list and the Roll of Honour, Cley next the Sea website. The CWGC website would be there for cross reference on places of burial or, for those with no grave, a name on a memorial. Each man was given their own page on which I would build up information.

For details on family background, bearing in mind that twenty of the twenty-nine were born in Cley (and seven of the eight on Mary Ferroussat's list), the Cley Baptism Register, entries c.1870 to 1900, was hugely important. One rector listed the date of birth in the margin, to go with the baptism entry. This was most useful. A few burials were recorded in the Cley Burial Register. The Cley Census entries for 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911 enabled me to follow the progress to manhood of many of those being researched.

In the BAHS History Centre I found Mary Ferroussat's working notes on each serviceman. She

had trawled the *Norfolk Chronicle* for the war years and had unearthed writing on sixteen different men. From August 4th 1916: *CLEY – Great sympathy is extended to Mrs F. Loades, who this week received the sad news that her husband Private Frank Loades has been killed. Mrs Loades, who was married about four months ago, was formerly Miss Kate Pinchen, and is on the staff of the Council School here.* (Kate Loades taught at Cley School all her teaching life). Some of the articles are much longer, but they all bring home the tragedy and sadness from the angle of the families back in Norfolk. I made two visits to the newspaper archives at Prospect House, Norwich, the home of the *Eastern Daily Press*, where I waded through the *Norwich Mercury* for the war years. My rewards were harder to come by as only nine entries were found. I was also able to use the website ancestry.com for some of the research.

## Service Records:

I was able to look at these for the RN, RNR and RNVR as they have survived, I did this at the National Archives at Kew which I visited several times, but the majority of the Army Service Records were destroyed by German bombing in World War 2. The four that I worked with gave me the feeling that I was dealing with real people, getting an understanding of their personalities.

My search engine is Safari and it opened many doors. I could find details of all the ships that Cley men served on, including where and how the ships met their fate. For the soldiers, regiment details gave information as to where a battalion was fighting at the time when a Cley serving soldier was killed. Diligent searching very occasionally found Battalion Diaries. These were gold dust.

## Selected Stories Of The Cley Thirty-Seven

The thirty-seven names from Mary Ferroussat's list: twenty-seven served in the Army and ten went to sea: five of these were Royal Navy (RN); one was Royal Naval Reserve (RNR); one was Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) and three were Merchant Navy.

I shall start with the Navy, it being the Senior Service. With the war only six weeks old there occurred one of the more shameful episodes in the history of the Royal Navy. Three obsolete armoured cruisers of 12,000 tons, *HMS Aboukir*, *HMS Hogue* and *HMS Cressy* were on patrol in the North Sea. By 08.00 on the morning of 22nd September 1914 all three had been sunk by the German submarine U9 with a loss of 1,459 lives.

**Petty Officer Stoker Frank Whatley**, on *HMS Aboukir*, was one of those who died. He was 50 years old, with a Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, and had been a Coast Guard at Cley when war was declared. 'He had been in charge of the local [Coast Guard] station for about three years, during which time he had earned the esteem and respect of all.' (*Norfolk Chronicle* 25th September 1914). This explains why he on the memorial in St Margaret's, although he hailed from Wiltshire.

On 31st May 1916 the only major sea battle of the 1914-1918 War, the Battle of Jutland, was fought in the North Sea between the British Royal Navy Grand Fleet, under the command of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe and the Imperial German Navy's High Seas Fleet. **Petty Officer 1st Class Henry Rowe** and **Blacksmith's Mate James William Grimes**, who are commemorated on the Cley Memorial, were serving on *HMS Invincible*, a battlecruiser built in 1907, and therefore dated at the time of this battle. The German battlecruisers *Lutzow* and *Derfflinger* engaged the *Invincible* and fired three salvos each and sank her in 90 seconds. At least one 12-inch shell from the third salvo struck 'Q' turret, penetrating the turret armour and detonating ready to use ammunition held in the working chamber. The explosion flashed back into the magazine causing a massive explosion which blew the ship in half. The officers and men killed numbered 1,026. There were six survivors.

The death of **Deck Hand George William Grimes** (RNR) appeared in the *Norwich Mercury* on 6th January 1917: 'The sad news has been conveyed by the Admiralty that George William Grimes of Cley, deck hand, was killed on board a trawler when that vessel came into contact with a mine.'

Across the country there must be many instances of errors and omissions: of men who are not on memorials and should be; also men who are on memorials when one could argue that they should not be. **Lewis Richard Mann**, ship's captain Elder Dempster Line, was from a distinguished Cley seafaring family. His father was a master mariner. At the time of his death he was a passenger on *SS Fabala*, torpedoed by German submarine U28, 'returning to Lagos, West Africa to take up his position as marine superintendent for Messrs Elder Dempster' (*Norfolk Chronicle* 2nd April 1915). Four of the ship's lifeboats had been lowered when the torpedo struck. Of 151 passengers, 104 drowned, together with 96 of the crew. That Lewis Richard Mann is not on the Merchantile Marine Memorial on Tower Hill, London makes a statement, but he is one of the twenty-nine on the St Margaret's memorial.

**Able Seaman Wilfred Golden Howes** (RNVR) was in an unusual unit. He was in the Royal Naval Division (as



**Fig. 2 CWGC Headstone in Cley churchyard commemorating Stoker 2nd Class James George Elvin**

was Rupert Brooke) which sailed to Gallipoli to serve as infantry. Howes was wounded and went by hospital ship to Alexandria, Egypt where he died on 10th May 1915. He was buried in the war cemetery there.

The only other sailor, of the ten, to receive a burial was **Stoker 2nd Class James George Elvin**, the last of the Cley men to die, on 13th September 1918, aged 18 years. He was serving on *HMS Vivid* at Devonport, a shore based training school for Stokers and Engine Room Artificers. He succumbed from a complication of pneumonia. His funeral took place in Cley Church on 17th September 1918 and he is buried in the churchyard, on the north-east side; his grave is marked with a CWGC headstone (Fig. 2).

The war was not much more than a month old when the first soldier on the Cley Memorial died. I did not manage to find a Cley connection for **Gunner Charles Alfred Gidney**, L Battery Royal Horse Artillery until after my article appeared in the GVN in September 2014. Well, the *Norfolk Chronicle* on 18th September 1914 provides the answer: 'The news that Driver Gidney of the R.H.A. has been wounded at the battle of Mons..... has strong interest here, as he is the son of Mr Gidney, of the Zetland Sanatorium. (a TB Hospital in Cley). He is the first local man to be hit.' Gidney and his L Battery took part in one of the great heroic engagements of the war. On the retreat from Mons L Battery stood strong against an advancing German Division (Fig. 3). Within two minutes most of the men were dead or wounded.





**Fig. 3 Commemorative postcard of the action in which Driver Gidney was fatally wounded**

One gun kept firing until its ammunition ran out. The officer and two NCOs at the gun all received VCs. Gidney died in hospital ten days later, which meant that he was given a burial and has a CWGC headstone, when so many of our soldiers from the war are 'Known unto God', with a name on a memorial, along with thousands of others.

The story of the life and death of **Private George Wells** is such a sad one, that it is produced as written, except for small changes, when it appeared in the May 2015 GVN.

George Wells is not commemorated on the Cley memorial, but he was born in the village on Christmas Day 1887 (baptised 20th January 1888 in Cley Church). About 60 percent of all soldiers' Service Records from the Great War were irretrievably damaged or lost completely as result of enemy bombing in 1940. George Wells's Service Record survives and runs to fifty-two items (found on ancestry.com). I have been able to piece together the sad story of his personal life and of his death.

After working as a gardener, on 21st June 1909 George Wells, at Cromer, joined the Royal Garrison Artillery, the Attestation papers showing that he signed on for eight years, followed by four years in the Army Reserve. Mabel Twiddy of High Street, Blakeney, gave birth to a daughter, Mabel Alma, on 12th September 1909. A military document shows that George Wells had 'a stoppage of pay of 4d a day for the support of the said child until she shall attain 13 years of age or shall die'. This was after he had signed a statement acknowledging that he was the father.

The Service Record shows that George Wells served with his regiment in Jamaica from 25th November 1910 to 2nd March 1914. Back in England, stationed at Deal, Kent, his marriage to Marie Ellen Catt in St George's Church, Deal, took place on 25th February 1915. By May his unit had moved to Blyth, on the coast about fifteen miles north of Newcastle. He was billeted at Gloucester Lodge in the town. He had not seen any action in the war which started the previous August.

On 10th May 1915 he died in Plessy Road, Blyth of 'a fractured skull caused by accidentally colliding with a motor car. No negligence was attached to the driver of the motor car.' (The report from the inquest held on 11th May 1915 in Blyth). His widow wrote to the War Office claiming a pension, but received a reply on 2nd



**Fig. 4 Memorial to Private Harold Woodhouse, Cley**

February 1916 stating that as her husband was 'not on duty at the time he met his accident which caused his death, his widow is not eligible for a pension from army funds'.

A sad story indeed.

**Private Harold John Woodhouse** was the youngest Cley serviceman to die in the war, aged 17. The *Norfolk Chronicle* for 21st May 1915 gives us detailed information on his short life and death. *Early in the week the sad news came to Mr John Woodhouse that his son Harold, who joined the 4th Battalion Norfolk regiment in August last, had died of pneumonia at Lowestoft. Private Harold Woodhouse was well-known and much liked on account of his high spirits and although a lad of barely seventeen was not happy until he left his employment at Glandford Mill, where he was learning the malting trade, and joined the Army. During the winter he had a considerable time at home on sick leave. On his return to the regiment he attended to his duties. Apparently a sharp relapse took place and death occurred at a very early hour on Monday morning (of pneumonia). Lieutenant Raven Cozens-Hardy [from Cley, and killed in 1917] was one of the deceased's officers, showing considerable attention. The remains have been brought to Cley for interment.* His grave, with a 'gothic' shaped family headstone, is at the northern end of the churchyard, on the left of the path leading to Church Lane (Fig. 4).

George and Mary Ann Barnes lived in a cottage on Newgate Green, Cley (Now lived in by a descendant,





*2 MCMR*

No 126275

Home Ptr W E Barnes

C Comp 74 Batt

I leave all my belonging  
to my Mother this is  
my last will.

Mother's Address

Mrs G Barnes

Newgate Green

Cley-next-the-sea

Norfolk England

Date June 3 1916

POST CARD

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS ONLY

*Dec 15<sup>th</sup> 1915*

*Return to*

*Brother to*

*W. E Barnes*

*Killed in action Sept 15<sup>th</sup> 1916.*

*12 Batt Canadians.*

POST CARD

MADE IN CANADA

CORRESPONDENCE HERE NAME AND ADDRESS HERE

*Return to Ernest Stangroom*

*W. E Barnes*

*Killed in action Sept 29<sup>th</sup> 1916.*

*2nd Canadian Mounted Rifles*

Fig. 5a, 5b, 5c, 5d, 5e The Barnes brothers, John Ernest on the left and William Elijah on the right, with William's terse Last Will and the even terser postcards recording their deaths in action. But why were the postcards apparently sent to Ernest Stangroom?



*Duplicate 84TH B*  
**ATTESTATION PAPER.**

No. *163283*

Folio. *2*

**CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.**

---

**QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.**

(ANSWERS.)

1. What is your name?..... *John Barnes*
2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born?..... *Cley By Sea, Norfolk, England.*
3. What is the name of your next-of-kin?..... *Mary Barnes*
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin?..... *Cley By Sea, E. S.*
5. What is the date of your birth?..... *April 4 1894*
6. What is your Trade or Calling?..... *Labourer*
7. Are you married?..... *No*
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated?..... *Yes*
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia?..... *Yes*
10. Have you ever served in any Military Force?..... *No*  
If so, state particulars of former Service.
11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement?..... *Yes*
12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE?..... *Yes*

*John Barnes* (Signature of Man).  
*Frank Harris* (Signature of Witness).

---

**DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.**

I, *John Barnes*, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

*John Barnes* (Signature of Recruit)  
*Frank Harris* (Signature of Witness)

Date *July 29* 191*5*

---

**OATH TO BE TAKEN BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.**

I, *John Barnes*, do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King George the Fifth, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity, against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors,

Fig. 6 Attestation Paper taken by John Barnes in Canada, 1915

Mark Reading). They had eleven children, six sons and five daughters, with a twenty year gap from oldest to youngest. The three youngest sons all died in the war. Many of the young Cley men (thirteen in total) joined their county regiment, the Royal Norfolk Regiment, and this is what **Private Ralph Barnes** signed on to serve with. He joined the 3rd Special Reserve Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment, and in June 1915 was stationed at Felixstowe. On 23rd June 100 men, and on 24th July 200 men, volunteered to transfer to the 1st Battalion

the Essex Regiment. Ralph Barnes was one of those. The new Essex Battalion men very soon after moved by train to Avonmouth (Bristol) where they boarded the liner *Royal Edward*, converted to a troopship, which sailed for the Mediterranean on 28th July. The 1,350 troops on board were reinforcements for at least eight regiments fighting at Gallipoli against the Turks. With the crew, there were almost 1,600 men on board. The *Royal Edward* arrived at Alexandria, Egypt on 10th August. The 300 Norfolk men (now Essex) went on a route

march just before leaving Alexandria. On the morning of 13th August the ship was sailing up the Aegean Sea towards Gallipoli. At about 9.20 a.m. the 300 men were on deck waiting for a foot inspection. Their lifebelts were down below. A torpedo from the German submarine *UB-14* struck. Most of the men dashed below to fetch their lifebelts. The ship keeled over and sank with remarkable speed, so almost all the Norfolk men died, including Ralph Barnes. In total the number who died approached 1,000. (printed in the GVN for August 2015).

The two youngest Barnes brothers, **Private John Ernest Barnes** (Fig. 5a) and **Private William Elijah Barnes** (Fig. 5b) were still living in Cley at the time of the 1911 Census. Soon after, they emigrated to Canada. Their Service Records were not available on the Library and Archives Canada website in 2014/2015, but they are now. The information they give has enabled me to get a real feel of their personalities.

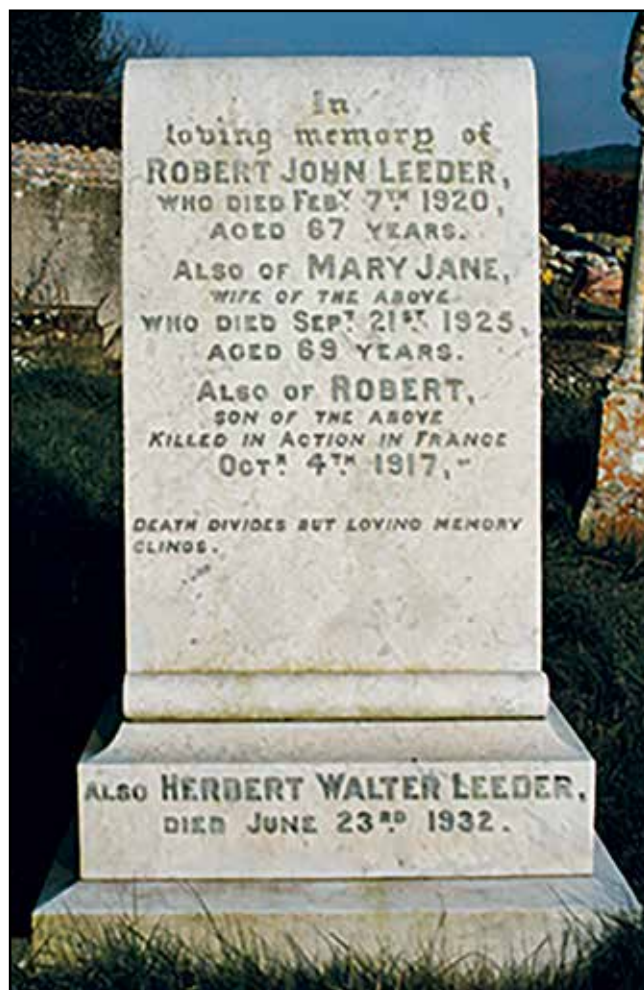
**Private John Ernest Barnes** was the youngest of the Barnes brothers, 16 years old at the time of the 1911 census. His Service Record states that he was 5ft 5ins tall, with tattoo marks on his left arm, a 'Bull dog and flag'. Within two months of signing on in July 1915 (Fig. 6) he sailed from Montreal on *HMT Corsican*, a ship that transported many thousands of Canadian troops across the Atlantic.

Based at the Shorncliffe Army Camp in Kent with the 36th Canadian Reserve Battalion, he was soon in trouble. On 7th December 1915 he was sentenced to '14 days' detention for insolence to NCO'.

On 21st February 1916 he transferred to the 18th Canadian Battalion, and shortly after was on his way to France. On 1st April 1916, in France, he was in hospital with impetigo and scabies, a sure sign of lack of vitamin C. Four times in the last six weeks of his life he was in a 'Field Ambulance' or 'Rest Station'. He was recorded with 'trench fever' on 15th July. On 16th August came his final 'discharge for duty'. Can one blame him if he was working overtime to try and keep away from the trenches. A month later he was dead, on 15th September 1916.

Two years older than his brother, **Private William Elijah Barnes** comes across as a much calmer and more organised young man. Signing on in Toronto two months after his brother, he did not sail for England until 29th March 1916, departing from Halifax, Nova Scotia on *HMT Empress of Britain* and docking at Liverpool on 9th April. Shortly before embarking for France on 9th June he wrote a Will; before that, he had 'Assigned pay to Mrs Kate Barnes, Sydenham, London S.E.'. Only in France for a short time, he was killed on the same Somme front as his brother. From the *Norwich Mercury* of 28th October 1916: *Great sympathy is felt for Mr and Mrs George Barnes of Newgate Green, who have been called upon to bear the loss of another son, the second within a fortnight, and the third since the war commenced.*

In 1911 **Lance-Corporal Reginald Mussett**, born in Cley, but the family moved to Syderstone, became employed as a gamekeeper at Sandringham. It was clear that joining the local TA regiment was expected of all men on the Sandringham Estate. Reginald Mussett's Service Record survives. His Attesting Officer when he signed on for the 1st/5th Norfolk Regiment on 28th November 1911 was Frank Beck, Agent for the Sandringham Estate. Question: 'Your



**Fig. 7 Private Robert William Thomas Leeder**

employer?' Answer: 'The King' (George V). On 30th July 1915 the 1st/5th Norfolk Regiment, with the Sandringham Company aboard, sailed for Gallipoli on *HMT Aquitania*. On 6th August they arrived at Lemnos, the majority of the battalion transferring to *SS Osmack*, on the 10th sailing from Lemnos to Imbros. On 11th they disembarked at Suvla Bay, and in the advance the next day the 1st/5th Norfolks were on the right. Their casualties: 22 officers and 350 other ranks. (The mystery of the fate of the Sandringham Company was the subject of a 1999 TV film starring David Jason). The truth is still not known. The remnants of the battalion were relieved in the line by the Essex Regiment on 14th August, marching back to base on the 15th to be joined by 3 officers and 157 other ranks (including Reginald Mussett) from the *Aquitania* who had been left behind at Lemnos. (This information has been taken from extracts of the original War Diaries of the 1st/5th Norfolks found on the internet). Reginald Mussett was promoted Lance/Corporal on 24th October 1915. On 15th November the battalion were back in the line and suffered heavy shelling for the next three days. The War Diary for November states that a considerable number of men were sick (101 in three days with 24 in hospital). Reginald Mussett will not have been in the line that last time. His Service Record informs us that he died of diphtheria at sea on board *HS Somali* on 22nd November en route for hospital in Alexandria and was buried at sea. (With small alterations, taken from the GVN for November 2015).



**Sergeant Ernest William Emery Gibbs** certainly had a fascinating and varied life as recorded in the *Norfolk Chronicle* on 8th June 1916: *Mr and Mrs William Emery Gibbs have received official confirmation of the death of their second son, Sergt. William Ernest Gibbs, in Carabar War Hospital, India, whilst on active service. Deceased, when quite a boy, entered a business house in Durban. Later on he decided to join one of the police forces and found himself in Johannesburg, where he joined the Mounted Police. His most exciting duty was in connection with Bambatta's Rising (Bambatha's Uprising in Natal 1906), and for his services he received a medal. On his marriage he again took up business. Shortly after the outbreak of war he volunteered and was accepted. He served under General Botha until a severe wound terminated, for a time, his military career. He afterwards proceeded to Bombay and enlisted in a battalion of his county regiment. Sergt. Gibbs was appointed on the staff of Brig.-Gen. Sir Percy Z. Cox. and usually drove his car. His last illness was a short one, and according to information received he passed away amid every care and attention.*

**Private Robert William Thomas Leeder** was one of five Cley men to end their days in the mud of Passchendaele (3rd Battle of Ypres). From the *Norfolk Chronicle* of 26th October 1917: *Mr and Mrs R. J. Leeder have received the news of the loss of their eldest son in France. In conveying the intelligence his Captain says, "It is with great grief that I am writing to inform you that your son was killed in action on October 4th. His battalion went over the top that day and advanced, but we lost a lot of officers and men. Your son was in the thick of it and showed great valour and bravery; and his death is a great blow to the Company. He died, however, fighting for his country and so met a noble death".* (Was this the truth? Or was it yet another case where the reality was very different and the family were fed 'valour', 'bravery' and 'nobility' to soften the blow). A headstone near the north-east corner of Cley churchyard records the death of Robert John Leeder on February 7th 1920 and Mary Jane Leeder on September 21st 1925. And underneath: 'also of ROBERT, son of the above, killed in action in France October 4th 1917 (Fig. 7).'

The Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum, and a volunteer there, were most helpful providing bits of information on the thirteen soldiers who served in the regiment during the war. These are shown in the two *Norwich Mercury* pieces on **Private Cecil Abram Gathercole**: 4th November 1916: *Mr and Mrs B. Gathercole have received information that their second son Private Cecil Gathercole, who volunteered for active service, with his parents' permission, although under age, has been wounded.* (Norfolk Regiment Casualty Book 1020: gunshot wound nose – General Hospital, Etaples and 1 General Hospital, Birmingham). 15th December 1917: *CLEY MAN KILLED It is with much regret the loss of a promising young Cley-next-the-Sea soldier is recorded. The death of Private Cecil Gathercole, who was killed in action in France on November 20th. The deceased soldier, who was in his 20th year, joined the army in November 1914. After his home service he was sent overseas, and was in the casualty list on two occasions (the second – 9th Battalion War Diary: wounded at Le Brebis 19/09/17) before he attained the age of 19. He bore himself with con-*

*spicuous courage and devotion to duty, and he had earned the confidence of his officers.*

The badly mutilated Service Record for **Private George Harold Drinkwater** survives. It shows his Attestation as taking place in Norwich on 16th November 1915, so he took the king's shilling just after his eighteenth birthday. His Service Record has him as George Howard Drinkwater. One little snippet of human detail is seen: 'Dirty on Parade': 6. 4.1916 – 2 days CB (confined to barracks). From the *Norfolk Chronicle* of August 17th 1917: *CLEY Mr and Mrs R.J. Drinkwater have received intimation of the death of their second son Private George Drinkwater, of the East Yorks. Regt, in France. His company commander in conveying the information spoke warmly of him as a cool, steady, hard worker in the trenches, whom it will be difficult to replace. He expresses the sympathy of all ranks of the company in which deceased was well liked. The lad was in his twentieth year and had spent two years in the army. From the Norwich Mercury of August 18th 1917: Mr and Mrs R.J. Drinkwater have received information of the death of their second son Private George Drinkwater of the East Yorks. Regt in France, through a shell bursting in the middle of his company, killing eight and wounding many men.*

The stained glass window in the Lady Chapel in St Margaret's Church is dedicated to the memory of the heir to the Lordship of the Manor of Cley, **Lieut. Raven Cozens-Hardy**, and his death will have sent shock waves throughout the Glaven Valley (Fig. 8).

From the *Norfolk Chronicle* of October 19th 1917: *CLEY. LIEUT. R. COZENS-HARDY KILLED IN ACTION. It is with deep regret that we have to record the death in action of Lieut. Raven Cozens-Hardy of the Norfolk Regt, who was killed in action in France on 9th inst. He was the only son of Mr and Mrs A.W. Cozens-Hardy, of Cley Hall, to whom deep sympathy will be extended in their bereavement. The deceased officer was extremely popular, both locally and in his battalion, the men of his platoon speaking most highly of him as a kind and considerate officer.*

In conclusion I feel I must write about the two soldiers in the Royal Engineers who are buried in the churchyard, in the north-west corner with CWGC headstones, near to the two wooden huts. I had been wondering for many years how these two men came to be buried at Cley. The answer came from my searching through the *Norwich Mercury* for the war years. They both died of consumption (tuberculosis: TB). Zetland Sanatorium, Cley (now Zetland House, home to the Knapp family) was set up by Dr Alfred Reginald Kay, and the two soldiers were sent there from their homes to, hopefully, recover. In the case of **Sapper George Mellor** 'he was invalided from the army and sent to Cley in the hope he would regain his health.' (*Norwich Mercury* 17th April 1915) (Fig. 11). The information on **Sapper William Porter** is much more extensive. He died aged 44, leaving a widow and six children. He had seen service in the Boer War in South Africa (1899-1902). His funeral in St Margaret's was attended by soldiers from the South Notts Hussars and the Royal Sussex Regiment, units that were training locally. He was buried with full military honours (Fig. 12).





Fig. 8 Cozens-Hardy window in St Margaret's, Cley





***Figs. 9 and 10 Commonwealth Military Cemeteries at Thiepval (upper) and Tyne Cot (lower) in Belgium, last resting places of several young men of Cley***



**Figs. 11 and 12 Sapper George Mellor (above) and Sapper William Porter (right), both buried in Cley churchyard**

**The eight names on Mary Ferroussat's list not commemorated in Cley Church**

John Creamer Brett	born Cley Master Mariner Captain SS <i>Umgeni</i> died 9th Nov. 1917. Aged 41, Commemorated Tower Hill Merchantile Marine Memorial
Brandon Francis Holman	born Cley 14593 Private 9th Batt. Norfolk Regt died 10th March 1917. Aged 21 buried Salhouse Churchyard (CWGC headstone)
Wilfred Golden Howes	born East Dereham B/1979 Able Seaman RNVR Nelson Battalion 2nd Naval Brigade, 63rd Royal Naval Division died 10th May 1915 15th General Hospital Alexandria Aged 23 buried Chatby War Memorial Cemetery, Alexandria, Egypt
Frederick Bertie Moy	born Cley Ship's cook Merchant Navy died 29th December 1917 Aged 27 Commemorated Tower Hill Merchantile Marine Memorial
Reginald Mussett	born Cley 1544 L/Cpl 1st/5th Battalion Norfolk Regiment Died 20th November 1915 at sea Aged 20 Commemorated Helles Memorial (Turkey)
William Ernest Turner	born Cley 2nd Lieut. 7th Battalion Worcester Regiment Killed in action 27th August 1917 Aged 38 Commemorated Tyne Cot Memorial (Belgium)
Herbert Wall	born Cley 325707 1st/9th Durham Light Infantry Killed in action 21st July 1918 Aged 41 Commemorated Soissons War Memorial (France) and Salhouse War Memorial
George Wells	born Cley 31490 Royal Garrison Artillery 41st Siege Battery Died Blyth, Northumberland 10th May 1915 Aged 26 Buried in South Shields (Harton) Cemetery



Age	Born	No.	Rank	Died	Serving With	Buried/Memorial
21	Cley	163283	Private	15.09.16	18th Batt. Canadian Infantry	Can. Inf. Vimy Memorial
29	N.Walsham	20588	Private	13.08.15	1st Bn Essex Regt	Helles memorial
23	Cley	136275	Private	29.09.16	2nd Can. Mo.Rifles	Vimy Memorial
29	Cley	14911	Private	17.10.16	19th Bn Essex Regt	buried France
20	Cley	240636	Private	19.04.17	1/5 Bn Norfolk Regt	Jerusalem Memorial
30	Cley	5194	Private	25.10.16	1/4Bn North'nd Fus.	Thiepval Memorial
31	Kendal	28368	2nd Lieut.	09.10.17	1/4 Bn Norfolk Regt	Tyne Cot Memorial
19	Cley	182002	Private	30.07.17	13th Bn E Yorks Regt	buried France
39	Langham	K53421	Stoker	24.01.18	Royal Navy	Chatham Nav. Mem.
18	Cley	40062	Stoker	13.09.18	Royal Navy	buried Cley ch'yd
19	Gaywood	31537	Private	20.11.17	9th Bn Norfolk Regt	buried France
30	Cley	36536	Sergeant	05.06.16	2nd Bn Norfolk Regt	Kirkee Mem. India
24	Cley	67611	Private	04.05.17	11th Bn E Yorks Regt	buried France
20	Ipswich	8276DA	Gunner	08.09.14	L Battery RHA	buried France
22	West Beckham	309857	Deckhand	21.12.16	Royal Naval Reserve	Chatham Nav. Mem.
31	Cley	40272	Bla's Mate	31.05.16	Royal Navy	Portsmouth N.Mem.
31	Cley	20578	Private	14.01.18	4th Bn Beds. Regt	buried France
23	Cley	T/202774	Private	12.10.16	1st Bn R War. Regt	buried France
38	Cley	24129	Private	04.10.17	3/4 Bn R. W.Surrey R	Tyne Cot Memorial
24	St Germans	46579	Master Mariner	19.07.16	8th Bn Norfolk Regt	Thiepval Memorial
41	Cley	14910	Gunner	28.03.15	passenger on Fabala	No memorial
27	Cley	23433	Private	29.08.18	Royal Garrison Art.	buried France
22	Cley	164548	Act. Cpl	04.03.18	10th Bn Essex Regt	buried France
21	Cley	37574	Private	04.07.16	2nd Bn Norfolk Regt	buried Basra, Iraq
40	Glandford	142041	P/Officer	31.05.16	Royal Navy	Portsmouth N.Mem.
30	Cley	16677	Private	27.03.18	1st Bn Beds. Regt	buried Creola, Italy
50	Warminster	3786	P/Officer	22.09.14	R.N.(Ret.) Coastgrd	Portsmouth N.Mem.
19	Cley		Private	20.11.15	7th Bn Norfolk Regt	buried France
17	Cley		Private	17.05.15	2/4 Bn Norfolk Regt	buried Cley ch'yd

**Notes on contributors**

Rev Dr T. J. Fawcett is a retired priest living in Langham.

Frank Hawes followed a varied architectural career working for large organisations by enjoying practising alone for twelve years in his home at Cley. He closed his practice in 1999 to indulge his other interests, including local history.

Eric Hotblack is a farmer and experienced fieldwalker.

Richard Jefferson is a former Cambridge cricket blue and played county cricket for Surrey. He taught at Repton Preparatory and Beeston Hall Schools and is now retired, firstly to Cley and then to Holt.

John Wright has a degree in Geography and as a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute prepared strategic planning policies and demographic forecasts for Norfolk County Council.

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