



Blakeney Area Historical Society Electronic Newsletter

November 2025

“Studying the History of Blakeney Haven and its Hinterland”



An old photograph of Cley Quay at (very) low tide, probably taken around the turn of the century, with the two lighters tied up at the quay, the Clam nearest the camera. Cargoes were trans-shipped into these lighters in the Pit and then the crew – usually a man and a boy – would quant the vessel up the Glaven channel on the in-coming tide. A quant was a long pole with a flat piece on the end so it didn't just sink into the mud; the flooding tide did most of the work, the crew mostly just guiding the vessel. At this period such activity was only possible on Spring tides.

Anecdotally, smaller vessels, like the Angerona, could still reach the quay on Spring tides, the last such cargo arriving just before the first World War.

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BAHS Events:

BAHS lecture Programme

Lectures are held at Cley Village Hall (NR25 7RJ for those who rely on Satnavs) on the last Tuesday of the month. We have decided to revert to evening sessions for September, October, March and April, while retaining afternoon meetings for the darkest part of the year November, January and February. This is to make allowance for the fact that some of our members are still working and may not be able to make afternoon sessions.

Evening lectures start at 19:30, afternoons at 14:30 (that's 7.30pm and 2.30pm for us oldies).

The full programme will be published on the website www.bahs.uk with a monthly preview in this Newsletter.

November Lecture

Tuesday 25th November 2025
at 2:30pm at Cley Village Hall



German Prisoners of War in Norfolk: A forgotten history from the Great War *Brendon Chester Cadwell*

In the early years of the Great War German combatant prisoners of war were held in large internment camps run by the Army. However, none of these were in Norfolk because of the fear of invasion or large-scale raids along the East Anglian coast. By the end of 1916 the threat of invasion had receded, but there was grave concern instead around food security. As the German U-boat campaign continued to menace the Transatlantic trade routes and labour was drained from agriculture and sent to the Front the fear was that food shortages would do what the German army had failed to do on the battlefield.

As a response, it was decided to draft in labour using German POWs and from 1917 Agricultural Working Camps were set up throughout Norfolk (as elsewhere) to help boost food production. This talk explores how these camps were setup and organised, what work the prisoners who volunteered undertook, and how they were received by the civilian population.

Dr Brendan Chester-Kadwell is a landscape historian specialising in the historical development of rural settlement, particularly those associated with coastal wetlands. He has published on settlement in the Eastern High Weald, an area that includes the Rother Upper Levels and has researched the development of High Weald wood pastures in the context of early settlement. His PhD thesis (University of East Anglia 2010) was on 'A Sense of Place in Rural Settlement'.

Brendan also has a background in medieval theology and church history and has undertaken post-graduate research at Birmingham University in ecclesiology. He is currently researching the impact of developments in ecclesiology on medieval church design and is in the process of compiling a compendium of angel roofs in Somerset.

In 2019 he edited and co-authored a book on the Carmelite Friary at Burnham Norton, Norfolk. The existence of a Great War German prisoners of war camp on the priory site at Burnham has inspired the writing of a forthcoming book on such camps in Norfolk with Pat Kadwell.

Further thoughts on the Walsingham Pilgrims

At the end of my talk about the pilgrim hostels in Walsingham, two questions were raised that I was not able to answer at the time.

A little calculation has enabled the first one about the capacity of the hostels to be solved. The largest was 115ft long and around 16ft wide. If sleepers were arranged either side of the building with their heads to the wall, this would leave a pathway of around 4ft down the centre. If each sleeper had 2-3ft of space, the capacity would be around 40-55 each side, 80-110 in all. So all 15 hostels that we identified, mostly much smaller, might accommodate up to 750 - a drop in the ocean if the Marian festivals attracted thousands of pilgrims.

Research has thrown a little light on the second question – that of waste disposal. Firstly, the general disposal problem of up to 100,000 pilgrims in a year and secondly the particular problem of “night-soil” disposal in the hostels.

Relief was forbidden in public places, so ostensibly was confined to latrines, often known as ‘sege’ or ‘necessary’ houses, frequently with multiple seats. One in London had 64 seats! If they were not located on a bridge or close to a river, they required the digging and emptying of huge pits. Norwich City Council in 1411 employed *fower latrinarum* for this purpose. The River Stiffkey in Walsingham does not have a significant current to remove effluent and the Priory would have frowned on latrines being upstream of it, so options for latrines in Walsingham were limited.

Inside the hostels, going outside amongst so many sleeping bodies at night without a candle would have been hazardous, so it must be assumed that pots were used, to be emptied in the morning. It is doubtful that the often-seen image of chamber pots being emptied out of jettied windows is anything other than fanciful, resulting in another disposal problem.

To the modern mind this all sounds messy and difficult, but for the majority of medieval pilgrims, little different from the situation at home.

Ian Hinton

Sources

Rawcliffe C., 2019, *Urban Bodies: Communal Health in Late Medieval English Towns*, Boydell
www.medievalists.net/2021/toilet-medieval

The use of chamber pots rather implies the provision of some sort of bed/bedframe for the sleeping pilgrims – somewhere for the ‘gazunder’ to go under – or is that too post-medieval?

There may still be time to book a ticket for the talk to be given by Andy Bull on *Discovering Norfolk's Pilgrim Routes* at Binham Memorial Hall on the **21 November**. Booking via the Wells Maltings – see details on page 6.

**Don't miss out. Booking is now open for
Church Going: A Stonemason's Guide to the Churches of the British Isles**

with Andrew Ziminski

Tuesday 18th November 2025, 7:00pm–8:00pm (GMT)



Master stonemason Andrew Ziminski has worked on the greatest Cathedrals in the land from Salisbury to St Pauls. His main area of expertise however is the repair of medieval churches. He says knowing a church is a key to the past that unlocks our shared history. In his talk he will reveal their fascinating histories, artworks, features and furnishings, from flying buttresses to rood screens, lichgates and chancels. His bestselling book, *Church Going*, is a handbook to Britain's glorious medieval parish churches has become a phenomenon, described by Sir Tony Robinson as '*joyous and illuminating*'
"Ziminski is a rare and wonderful voice." – Rory Stewart

Andrew Ziminski is a stonemason, church conservator and author living and working in Frome, Somerset. He has four decades of experience working on some of the greatest cathedrals and churches in Britain, including the tower of Salisbury Cathedral and the dome of St Paul's in London. He is a SPAB William Morris Craft Fellow, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and conservation advisor to the Salisbury Diocesan advisory committee for the care of churches. He is the author of *The Stonemason: A History of Building Britain*.

A recording will be made available to registered participants only for a limited time after the event.

Admission: £5.00 (BALH Members FREE) Book at <https://come.ac/JNFW->

**** SPECIAL OFFER **** If you belong to a BALH Member Society, ask them for their discount code, which will reduce your admission fee to just £3.00.

Booking closes Tuesday 18th November at 1:00pm GMT

Other Events

Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group

Lectures are held in the Thomas Paine Centre, UEA, which is on the right towards the end of Chancellor's Drive from the Security Lodge. It is signed as such over the side entrance but the main entrance is styled 'Norwich Business School'. There is a convenient bus stop very close to the Thomas Paine Centre/Norwich Business School block. The West Car Park is right beside and is open on a pay-and-display basis at weekends – payment to be made via the Ringo app (cash not accepted).

The entrance to it is on the right off Chancellor's Drive, just after the bus shelters (ignore the 'staff only' sign).

15 November 2025

The Roman Catholic Churches of East Anglia

Matthew Champion (Freelance Heritage Consultant)

13 December

Is That a Crumhorn? : Musical Instruments of the Medieval and Renaissance Eras

A presentation by Hexachordia (an early music trio), followed by festive refreshments

Obituary

Michael Lee (1936-2025)

Readers may know that Michael Lee, a resident of Blakeney for the past 40 years, died on 21st September at the age of 89. After living in Egypt as a youngster he became a mechanical engineer working in the defence industry in both this country and the USA. In Blakeney Michael gave practical support to many village groups and to anyone needing his help. He was an experienced sailor and had many other interests, including the study of various aspects of local history,

He also made a contribution to the development of this Society. When the Blakeney History Group (BHG) was formed in 1990 it had a core of active people supported by others with an interest in the history of the area. For a while five people formed an informal 'committee' but soon Michael joined them to make a group of six, The BHG became the BAHS in July 1997 and Michael continued as a member of the new Committee, serving as its Joint Chairman in 1999 and 2000.

Michael used his measuring skills to survey Wiveton churchyard for the article which appears in the *Glaven Historian* No. 3. He made a similar contribution to the Society's surveys of the old quay area in Wiveton. When Peter Carnell used his resistivity meter to survey various sites in the locality, Michael was an enthusiastic helper in laying out measuring tapes and walking along with the meter.

In 1998 the BAHS arranged a series of lectures on local vernacular architecture and course members were able to survey in detail a house in Blakeney High Street. Michael's meticulous plans, ranging from elevations and floor plans to door hinge designs, can be seen in the *Glaven Historian* No. 2 for 1999, together with his interpretation of the various phases of building.

Michael is one of the many people who deserve to be remembered for their contribution to the development of this Society.

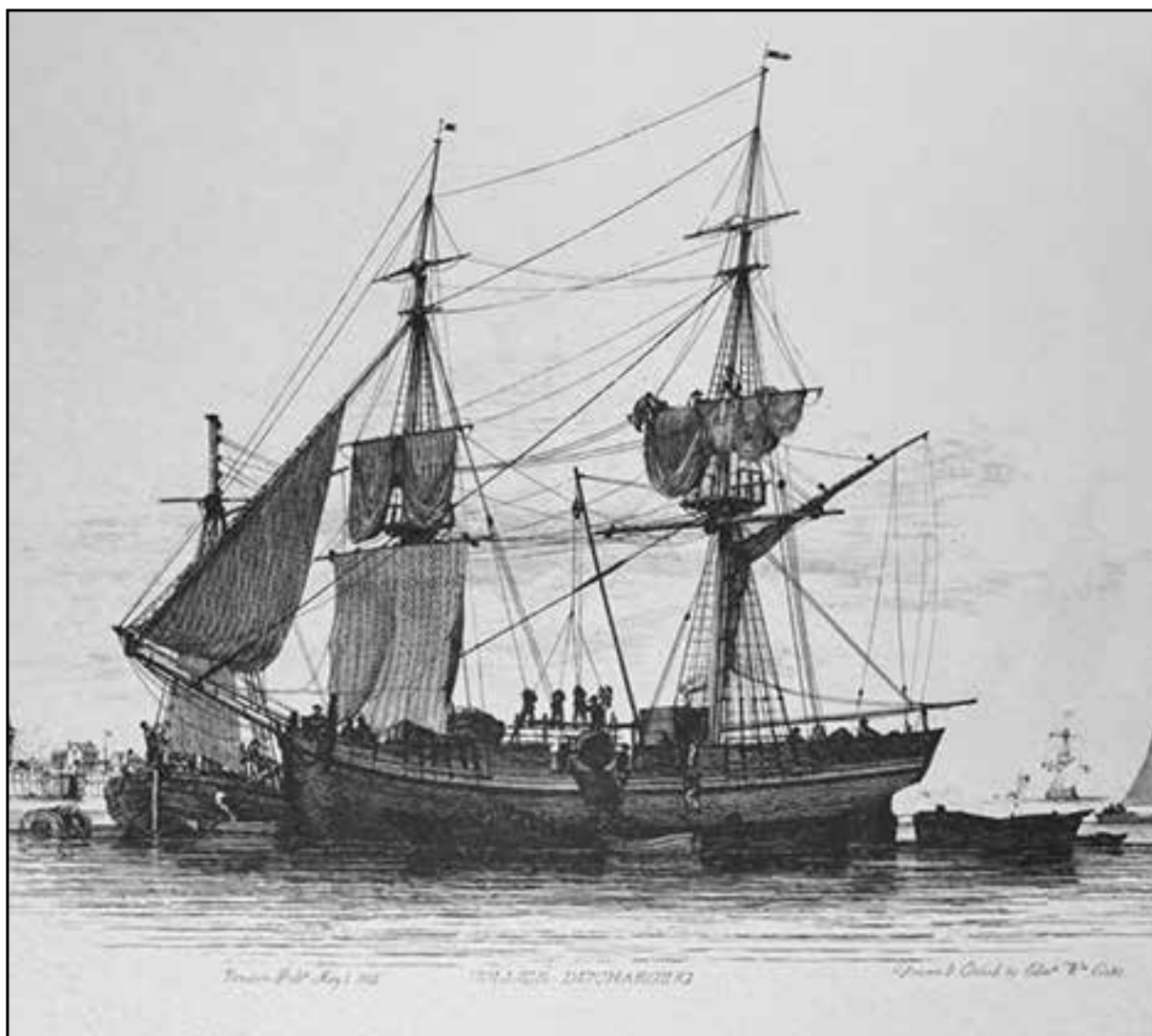
John Wright

The Chalder Question

While we have long assumed that the cargoes of coal shipped from north-east England to the Glaven ports used the Newcastle Chalder, defined by statute of 1694 as 53cwt, as their measure, there was always the nagging doubt that it might have been the London Chalder which was half that volume. It was no relief to find among my notes taken from the Customs Letter Books the following definitive statement, dated 1711:

“The Winchester Bushell 18½ inches wide throughout and 8 inches deep. Coal Meters instructed to use standard measure and to reckon 36 Winchester Bushells to the Chalder”

Thus a Winchester bushel (flat) had the volume 2150.699 cubic inches, or 1.24 cubic feet. Taking the density of coal as being typically 40-42 cubic feet per ton, 36 Winchester Bushels would hold just over a ton – heaped say 26½ cwt depending on how well heaped. So it was definitively the London Chalder, contrary to assumption. So the question remains: at what point in the journey from Newcastle to Cley did the cargo mutate from Newcastle to London chalders, and what is the implication for our interpretation of the Port Book entries?



Collier Discharging, an etching by Edward William Cooke, published in London 1 May 1828. Note staging for the whippers and their ropes connected via the derrick to the coal bucket. The bucket would be loaded in the hold, the whippers would jump from their staging thus hauling the bucket up from the hold to where it could be ‘metered’ before being tipped over the side into the waiting lighter. In 1828 coal was still subject to duty in London.

A Bust-up at Cley

Richard Kelham

Once upon a time, long, long ago, I spent some time in the Round Room at Chancery Lane, retained as an outpost of the Public Records Office when the main archive was removed to Kew, going through volumes of correspondence between Customs HQ and their outpost at Cley; in this case CUST96/152.

I was revisiting the notes I made at the time and came across a nugget of information that may well be of interest to present readers: dated 23 December 1712 was a letter concerning Boatmen (a Customs Officer rank) Henry Starling and John Bateman "...lately very much beaten and abused in the execution of their dutys [sic] by Edward Beavis master of the *Golden Lyon* and we direct that you transmit to us affidavits of the particular facts sworn ... in order to ... the prosecution of the said Beavis ..."

A later note, dated 12 March 1712 [ie 1713 by modern reckoning as the year change was then on Lady Day] gives the order to "prosecute to condemnation 20 bottles of brandy or spirits seized by one of the boatmen on board the *Golden Lyon*". This was presumably the cause of the earlier kerfuffle.

Next thing is an undated report stating that Beavis had arrested Starling and Bateman by *writ quominus* (more on that in a minute) and that the Customs Collector was to defend "at the Queen's charge".

A *writ of quominus* was a legal fiction which allowed the Court of Exchequer to obtain jurisdiction over cases normally heard in the Court of Common Pleas. As it was the duty of the Court of Exchequer to collect the Queen's revenue, it employed the legal fiction of a *writ quominus* so that the plaintiff in a debt case – in this instance Beavis – could claim that he was a debtor to the Queen, and that the defendants' debt – the duty to be paid on 20 bottles of hooch – prevented him from paying the Queen. Hence the arrest of Starling and Bateman leading to the hearing before the Court of Exchequer. Obviously any expenses incurred by the Customs Men were to be covered by HM Customs. Like many an interesting tale glimpsed in old documents, the outcome is not recorded, but it is interesting to see that, in the eternal war between smugglers and Customs, the smugglers did not come quietly.

The use of *writs of quominus* was abolished in 1883.

Friends of Binham Priory

Binham Memorial Hall

21 November 2025, door open at 7:00 pm

Discovering Norfolk's Pilgrim Routes

Andy Bull

A must for walkers and lovers of the area's past.

Booking essential.

Tickets £10 including glass of wine/soft drink.

Contact The Maltings, Wells

wellsmaltings.org.uk

01328 710885



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