

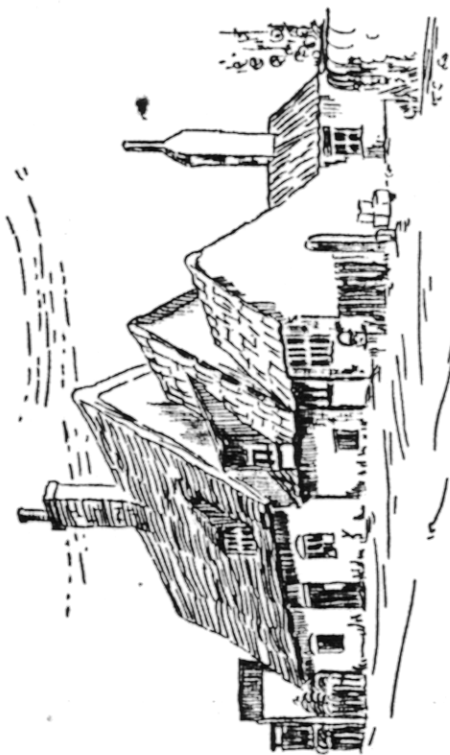
# I N N S O F T H E S U F F O L K C O A S T

B Y

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Brett Valley Publications

1969



THE OLD BLUE ANCHOR From a drawing in the possession of Mr. John Price

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### WALBERSWICK

#### THE ANCHOR HOTEL

In the 1870's, when the inn that was called the Blue Anchor looked much as it does in the above illustration, the host was Isaac Crisp. He was an obliging man, for sometimes he allowed gipsies to hire one of his rooms for a merry evening of singing, dancing and drinking.

One evening in early Summer, just after the gipsies had made their cheerful departure, Isaac Crisp discovered that a large quantity of clover had been cut from the field behind the Blue Anchor. What happened next was described by a Mrs. Lusher, whose several jolly anecdotes about Walberswick life greatly enriched the pages of *Ferryknoll* by Carol Christie (a nom de plume) published in 1911 by the St. Catherine Press. Said Mrs. Lusher, "Mrs. Crisp was a werry determined sort of woman, and she had the horse put in the chaise, and she sent for my mother, who had been working in the kitchen at the Anchor, to come with her, and off they went to Blythborough."

At Blythborough the pursuers heard that the gipsies had gone to Westleton, so they drove there and knocked up the village constable—probably Joseph Bruce. Now the chase was on. We imagine this rural, mid-nineteenth century Flying Squad, in full cry, the determined Mrs. Crisp urging on her horse, the excited and possibly apprehensive member of her kitchen staff lurching by her

side, and the constable's weight reducing the speed of the chaise as it trundled through the peaceful, rutted Suffolk lanes on that Summer night.

The gipsy van could not have been far ahead of the pursuing Blue Anchor chaise, and from Westleton the trail led to Kelsale. Here the posse was told the gipsies had gone to Culfer Green, and the relentless pursuers kept steadfastly on their way. Now, says Mrs. Lusher, "It was werry dark and the lanes were narrow, but presently they heard the dogs a-barking and saw lights." Mrs. Crisp and the constable got out of the chaise, leaving it in the care of Mrs. Lusher's mother, and they set out to reconnoitre.

Seeing the gipsy van, and being satisfied that here indeed was their quarry, they walked back to the chaise, got in, and drove right up to the spot. "It was a wild place," said Mrs. Lusher. "The heather up to the wheels nearly, but where the gipsies were was all smooth and grassy." As the party approached there was increased barking from the dogs, and when the gipsy men came to investigate there was a good deal of swearing. Women came out of tents and the van to reinforce the general commotion, but justice appears to have been both summary and satisfactory, for the gipsies paid for the clover.

It was between two and three in the morning when Mrs. Crisp and her companion, accompanied by the Westleton constable, returned to the Anchor for some very welcome cups of tea and something to eat.

Such is the story, as told by Mrs. Lusher to Carol Christie. We are left with the puzzling thought that everyone concerned covered several miles of lanes in those few hours, and we wonder how the Westleton constable got home.

When Carol Christie first knew Walberswick in the 1880's, "the village green had linen posts and washing on it, and geese and goslings, but advancing progress swept them away." She thought the village was much more picturesque then, "many more of the old sheds and granaries were left." At that time, John Veasey was at the Blue Anchor, and William Cleveland ran the Bell.

In the first decade of this century W. A. Dutt thought Walberswick was the most picturesque village on the Suffolk coast.

The cottages seem to have been built and grouped together for the benefit of artists; the wooden bridges that span the dykes in the salt marshes are wonders of rustic work; the shanties in which the fishermen store their gear and smoke their sprats and herrings are delightful to the eye of the painter and a shock to the nerves of the architect; hulks, capstans, anchors, chains, spars, and every kind of wreckage lie strewn about in picturesque disorder; while ocean, river, salt marsh, heathland, firs, and the grand old ruined church combine

to make Walberswick a delightful little village and an ideal place for a quiet holiday.

Change has come to Walberswick since then, and architects have done much to make it a village of delightful houses; it is still an ideal place for a quiet holiday.

Dutt was writing of the time when George Lines was combining the trade of pork butcher with that of innkeeper at the Anchor, the colour qualification having been dropped during the 1890's.

Mr. Ernest Winyard, who with his wife has the Tuckshop at Walberswick, and whose family ran the Anchor from 1924 until 1959, was there when the old Anchor was pulled down and the new building erected behind it, and opened at Easter, 1929. But the old building lives on. It was taken down and re-erected, timber by timber and with craftsmen's care, and it stands today, close by The Tuckshop, and it is called Anchor Lea. The old stables, however, built of large pebbles and flints, all laid in courses, remain alongside the hotel.

Mr. Winyard recalls that the cellar of the old pub was six steps below ground level, and from the cellar floor, two more steps dropped to a small space in front of a bricked-up doorway. The existence of an underground passage had always been suspected, and eventually, when water pipes were laid, a passage was indeed discovered, and its course traced to the Anchor's cellar. The passage ran towards the beach, with which it would have formed a useful, secret way. The risk of flooding would have been slight, for it is believed that the passage was built in those remote days when Walberswick was higher above sea-level than it is now. We can only make guesses as to purposes for which the passage was used.

When Mr. Winyard left the Anchor, he took with him a fine portrait, painted by Alan Davidson, of an old Walberswick worthy, William Dunctett. It used to hang over the bar, and its subject would stand before it, mug in hand, and address it thus, "Billy, you drunken old b——, you're allus in the pub. You know the wife don't like it, get you on home."

An anchor is moulded on the plaster above the entrance to the hotel, and manager Mr. John Price has had it painted blue in commemoration of the former name. A real anchor stands on the forecourt, on the site of the original pub. It weighs about 9 cwt., and Mr. Price believes that before it was eroded by the sea it weighed half as much again. Mr. "Dinks" Cooper, a fisherman, brought it up from the sea bed in his nets. Mr. Price swapped a bottle of rum for it. Local belief is that the anchor came from a prison ship, anchored off-shore about 150 years ago.

The Anchor today is one of a trio owned by Sole Bay Hotels, the others being the Swan and the Crown at Southwold.

Under the management of Mr. Price and his wife Pauline—every one calls her Paul—it has earned a great reputation for catering. Roast Duck is a speciality in a splendidly varied menu. All poultry used is free range, and no poultry or meat has been frozen. It was at the Anchor that I first ate Buttered Salsify.

The Anchor's dining room is charmingly fresh and modern, and, like other rooms, hung with the work of local artists—as befits an hotel in a village which has a strong artistic tradition. But what I particularly like about the Anchor are its fine garden houses.

Each comprises a large bed-sitting room, excellently furnished, and a separate bathroom. They have electric fires, and even points for electric blankets. Garden chairs are thoughtfully provided so that guests may sit in a charming garden without having to leave the hotel premises—unless it be to traverse the wooded, end part of the garden, and so through a gate to a footpath leading to the beach.

### THE BELL HOTEL

For how many centuries of Walberswick's long history has the older part of this building stood beneath one of the merriest and most popular of English inn signs? Walberswick, like Orford and Dunwich, was once an important and prosperous town, carrying on an extensive trade in fishing and shipbuilding. Could the Bell Inn have been standing as long ago as 1451, when thirteen Walberswick barques traded in Northern waters, and 22 fishing boats worked off the coast? Perhaps it was in business during the Reformation, serving disconsolate fishermen with such ale as they could afford in a period of sharp decline in their industry. If so, it is a survival of those serious fires which ravaged Walberswick in 1633, 1683, and 1749.

It is certain that the stone flags and white Suffolk bricks which form the floor of one of the bars have been worn concave by many generations of feet, just as the high-backed settles have been polished by successive changes of fashion in breeches. It is agreeable to believe that the Bell, if only because of its name, played a part in a joyous local occasion some two hundred years ago.

In 1767, the bell of St. Andrew's Church was sent to London by sea, and was recast by Lester and Pack at the Whitechapel Foundry. In due course it made the return journey, and was landed at Walberswick Quay. On May 14, 1768, it was re-hung in the steeple, when—according to the Churchwardens' accounts—five quarts of beer were supplied to celebrate the occasion at a cost of 1s. 3d. Beer at threepence a quart! In 1584, the church's "great bell," weighing 1,707 lbs., had been sold to Thomas and George

Smith, of Ipswich, at 31s. per 100 lbs., and over the years there are various records of other bells having been sold. Bells are not without significance in Walberswick's history.

Stephen Southwold, in his novel *The Inconstant Wife*, published by Robert Hale, tells a romantic story of this part of Suffolk during the Napoleonic wars, and makes the Bell at Walberswick the scene of a desperate encounter between a press-gang and its intended victims. This is good, robust fiction, but the Bell, like other inns on the Suffolk coast, must have known those dreaded visits by impressment officers and their men, intent on securing men for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Donald Hay, the present landlord of the Bell, has a photograph taken in 1890 when the building was thatched. Fire caused considerable damage to the Bell on the Saturday of August Bank Holiday week-end in 1949, and the present building is a harmonious blend of old and comparatively new construction. Both bars have fine, open fireplaces—a gleaming copper hood is over the one in the saloon bar—and in the Winter customers may take their choice of two blazing log fires. But the Bell is a cheerful, welcoming inn at any time. When I called on a morning in that wonderful October of 1969, it was gay with Autumn flowers.

Mr. and Mrs. Hay have some nice letting bedrooms with fascinating views, and guests take breakfast in a large room hung with Mr. Hay's collection of coaching water colours, painted by H. and A. Standing in 1891. The saloon bar, too, has some nice coaching and sporting prints.

Carol Christie, "Ferryknoll," *Walberswick Notes*, 1911.

W. A. Dutt, *The Norfolk and Suffolk Coast*, 1909.

Allan Jobson, *Walberswick Story*, 1953.

*East Anglian Miscellany*, 1942.

*Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, Vol. VIII.

'The History of the "BLUE ANCHOR" Inn at Walberswick.

Publicans:

1787 - 1799 Thomas Maggs. Earliest tracable publican.  
1799 - 1812 Ann Maggs (his widow)  
1812 - 1824 John Banks (son-in-law of Ann Maggs)  
1824 - 1827 Mary Banks (widow of John Banks)  
1827 - 1844 William Easey  
1844 - 1860 apprx. Isaac Crisp  
1860 - 1868 apprx. Henry Cleveland  
1868 - 1879 " Robert Meadows  
1879 - 1883 " Gooding Burley  
1883 - 1890 " John/Easey  
1890 - 1910 " George Lines Now named "The Anchor".  
1920s- 1924 " Clow or Clough  
1924 - 1927 John Winyard

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1927 The "Anchor" Inn was dismantled and re-erected ca. 150 yds. further up the Street on the opposite site and renamed: "Anchorlea", by the builder Fred Thompson, as private residence.

28.3.1928 First purchaser: Mrs. Catharine Corkhill Scott Morrison, sister-in-law of Mr. F.E. Willcocks, a neighbour.

1.12.1937 Mrs Agnes Eleanor Brown, her sister, now Mrs. Willcocks. (By will)

26.7.1949 Mr. Frederick Charles Joseph Knights.

29.11.1949 Mr. Willi Hoffer (Physician and psychoanalyst from Vienna)

25.10.1967 Mr. W. Ernest Freud (Grandson of Prof. Sigmund Freud)

3.9.1986 Mr. Hanns Walter Lange (From Berlin)

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