

WALBERSWICK

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO: 64

February 2021

Newsletter Editor's report

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Still no dates for meeting in the Village Hall but there is light at the end of the tunnel.

It feels like we have been here before but it was much warmer last time. The October 2020 edition included recollections of the first lockdown and they were generally upbeat bearing in mind the circumstances. It would be interesting to get another set of memories following the winter lockdown. Maybe you could submit some experiences when the green shoots of spring, vaccination roll-out and some feeling of normality are well underway? It would be good to leave a little record for the Walberswick folk of the future.

Having moved tiers three or four times in a matter of weeks over Christmas and New Year I am starting to get confused. We routinely put out a Newsletter in February which may have been printed in January so I am calling this a normal "February" Newsletter, though due to internet speed you will receive it in January. We have another Newsletter in preparation which you hopefully will get in February and this will be the first "lockdown" issue of 2021. Let's hope that we do not need many more.

I try to have a theme running through each issue. The first article by Edward Wright (thank you so much again Edward) places us at the start of the 20th century (sounds so recent when you say it like that). This year, 2021, is a census year and we should soon see the release of the 1921 census. Exciting and it will be the last release for decades.

The following piece is also related to the early 1900s. I am a big fan of David Olusoga and his "A House Though Time" series, so I could not help borrowing this for the second article. There must be hundreds more stories like this one in the village. The original deeds can be a goldmine of information. Do not let your solicitor throw them away if you sell! Please pass them to WLHG. If you have them in your possession then consider lending them to us.

A small link between the two articles is the windmill that used to stand just off The Street and lives on in a number of house names.

Finally, you are receiving this newsletter because we believe you are a member of WLHG. It is "chase-up" subscription time. Thank you to those members who have paid their subscriptions for 2021. If you have not yet done so, payment details can be found with Edward Wright's email of 11th December. We would like to thank all our members who have stuck with us during this difficult time. Believe us – we will be back with a bang as soon as we can.

John English - Newsletter Editor – email johnrenglish@tiscali.co.uk

The Changing Village: 1901 to 1911 - Edward Wright

The census taken in the spring of 1901 shows the village moving towards a future of tourism and second home ownership and away from agricultural work. There were only fifteen men on the land, compared to forty-six in the 1841 census sixty years before. Twenty-one men were working in the building trade in 1901; substantial new houses were changing the look of the village.

Despite Walberswick's reputation as an artists' colony there was only one artist on the 1901 census, Parker Hagarty the watercolourist. He was staying with his wife Laura at Rooftree in The Street. The census was taken in April which was a little early for the summer influx of artists.

In the 1911 census the population was 372, roughly the same as ten years before, but the villagers' occupations had changed. Walberswick was by now well established as a holiday destination and a place to buy second homes and eventually to retire. The most common description in the census for the new wave of property owners is "private means"; in other words, they had an income from capital usually generated by their families' involvement in the professions or business. By 1911 they had become major employers in Walberswick: thirty-three women and thirteen men were employed looking after the new families, their houses and gardens.

Charles and Ellen Mallet of Tower House (now Greengates) are the epitome of the new type of resident; they owned a ladies' outfitters in Sloane Street and Tower House was the holiday house that was to be their home when they retired. This was the era in which many prosperous people were building houses in Walberswick and Charles Mallett was the most prolific of them all. As well as Tower House he built The Terrace opposite the Anchor and the terrace of houses usually known as Railway Cottages, off Palmers Lane. On census night in 1911 Charles and Ellen were in London but there were four servants and a housekeeper left in charge.

Another business dependent on visitors was the lodging house; there were six people described as lodging house keepers in 1911. Millside was a typical example; it was run by George and Mary King and provided work for one assistant. It is best known for the artists who stayed there but on census night in 1911 Frederick Hopkins and his wife Jessie were at Millside with their three children. Frederick was a reader at Cambridge and no doubt knew Professor Seward, the Cambridge botanist just up the road at Old Farm.

The female servants of Walberswick tended to be young, mostly in their teens or twenties with very few over fifty. This was a precarious way of life and could lead to dire straits for those who became unable to work through infirmity or old age. The thirty-three female Walberswick servants probably thought themselves more fortunate than the thirty-five "former servants" who were inmates at Blything Union Workhouse, just five miles away.

Pictorial Reminders

Millside, as mentioned above, was named presumably as it was to the side of the mill when built. This working mill would have been a significant part of the landscape, especially viewed from the east. The photograph and two paintings on the next page all show the mill. The photograph shows Mazoe, which we know was completed by 1909 because that is when it was sold at an auction at the Bell. It was described as a "Bungalow Residence" and it had two pumps, a well and a "soft water" cistern - rain water I guess. Lewis Cady built it and it looks as though he started work in 1888 or perhaps a little earlier. He bought the land

from his father in that year but the deeds show that he had already started work at the date of the sale. Threeways was built between 1904 and 1912 and it can't have been there when the photo was taken because it would have blocked the view. It seems to me that the photo dates around 1900 so it would tie in with what Edward writes above about the changing village.



The two paintings are by Parker Hagarty, the watercolourist also mentioned above. He was in Walberswick in 1901 and they have a look of the village about them.

A Walberswick House through Time: The Mystery of Merville Bungalow – John English

Many of you will have noticed that Creek Cottage has new owners. If not, to bring you up-to-date, on 16th October 2020 Creek Cottage was sold to Ben and Rebecca Whiting. Rebecca is a WLHG committee member and descended from the Gilbert family who lived in a number of houses in Walberswick. Many will remember Peggy Rogers, Charlie Gilbert's daughter, and Rebecca's grandmother. I would like to thank Rebecca and Ben for helping me with this article.

I have always been intrigued by Creek Cottage as my father lived there as a young boy, except it was a very different building then and called Merville Bungalow. At some point the family moved up the street to Beach View. I do not know exactly when the move took place (sometime in the 1930s) or if Merville Bungalow was demolished and then rebuilt as Creek Cottage or if one "morphed" into the other.

In WLHG Newsletter #20, August 2001, Barbara Priestman wrote a short history of Creek Cottage. Barbara had lived there since 1980 but it had been in the family since 1951 (Francesca Wilson who bought it in 1951 was her great aunt). In Barbara's article she says Creek Cottage was built by Robert English (my grandfather), in the early 1930s – you can read the full article at <http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/assets/WLHG/WLHG-newsletters/WLHG-NEWS-LETTERS-14-26.pdf>. Barbara's article is a great starting point. The following is a cut-down version of Barbara's words and contains a lovely detail about Peter Buxton. Fortunately Ben and Rebecca remain in touch with Barbara's brother, Chris Priestman, and he has sent us details from the original deeds for which I thank him. The great news is it gives details going all the way back to 1883. The slightly frustrating thing is that this mostly concerns the land and not the buildings put on the land. So, the mystery of how Merville Bungalow became Creek Cottage remains.

Let's start with Barbara's information:

CREEK COTTAGE was built by Robert English in the early 1930s. Originally, it was a simple rectangular house comprising 2 bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen/dining room. It had a pantile roof and several outhouses/sheds were clustered on its west side. The English family lived in it - with 5 children - until it was sold to Mr and Mrs Shaw. It was sold to Francesca Wilson in 1951 "for (her) nieces and their families to have holidays by the sea". In the Great Flood of 1953, the sea filled the house with four feet of water. Permanent salt damage was done to the lath and plaster walls. Insurance money paid for an open veranda and a small kitchen to be added to the south side of the building. In about 1960 Francesca, always willing to offer shelter and accommodation when it was needed, offered Peter Buxton one of the outhouses to live in. Peter was a very cultured, gentle man who had been a London architect of some ability until he had a breakdown. Somehow he had eventually arrived, homeless, in Walberswick. He was so grateful to Francesca that he dedicated the rest of his life to transforming the cottage. He installed a ladder/staircase up to the roof space, boarded that out and created two new bedrooms. His skills as a builder were not quite equal to his architectural vision so that, over the years, the weather was able to penetrate gaps between windows and walls. This furthered the deterioration of the external fabric of the building but left us with a delightfully conceived "new" house. Peter died in 1979. Francesca died in April 1981, having passed the cottage on some years earlier to her niece, Rosalind Priestman. I moved to Walberswick in September 1980.

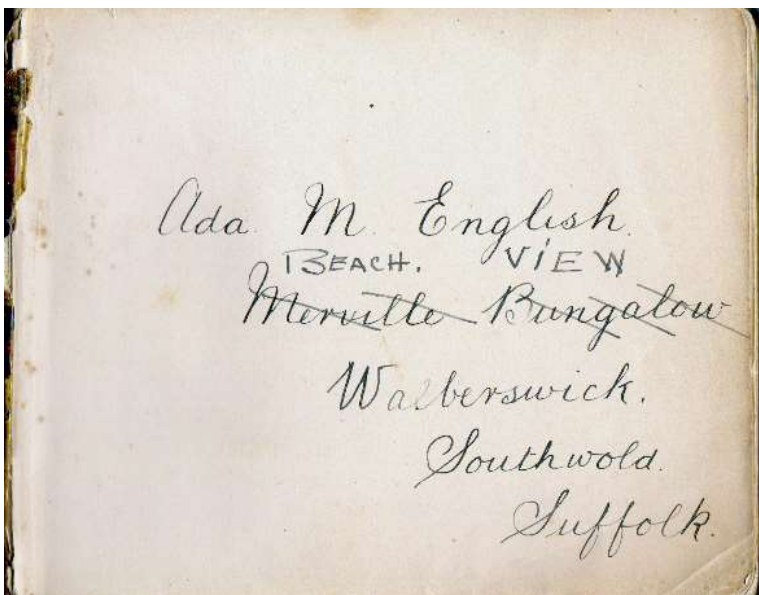
With the benefit of Chris Priestman's transcript of the deeds we can see that the history of this building goes back to 13th October 1883 when the 'Creek Cottage' land was sold to Martha Marshlain by persons unknown. Martha may well be an ancestor of the Marshlains who ran the Tuck Shop many years back and then The Ship at Dunwich. On 30th June 1893 George English (my great Grandfather) bought the land to the North of 'Creek Cottage' (now Samphire Cottage) from Martha Marshlain. On 21st February 1911 a parcel of 'Creek Cottage' land and bungalow was indentured by Lydia English (wife of Robert) to George English (her son) freehold. This is interesting as it mentions "bungalow" as well as the land. So, it looks like there was a bungalow on the land from before 1911. In 1920 an event may have affected the bungalow, but only the garden is mentioned, when a "tidal wave" rushed up the creek which left a pond 58 feet in length from East to West on the bottom South Eastern corner of the garden. This cut off the path that originally ran up the East side of the property permanently. On 28th June 1926 Lydia English died (her husband had died many years previously) and it now passed to George English. This included the 9 foot section of the private road (cartway) along its Western side (this is presumably the track that exists today). On 25th August 1939 the piece of land and bungalow (presumably now the basic Creek Cottage) was bought freehold by Herbert Fairfax Hitchcock from George English for £307.10 shillings. On 9th September 1946 the piece of land and bungalow was bought freehold by Mrs Joan Lindley Shaw (of Blythburgh) from Herbert Fairfax Hitchcock for £400. On 23rd April 1951 the piece of land and bungalow was bought freehold by Miss Francesca Mary Wilson from Mrs Joan Lindley Shaw for £1,235. She acquired it for all her nieces and friends to holiday there. There is more detail concerning transfers within the family but basically this brings us alongside the account written by Barbara. One interesting detail concerns an outcome of the 1953 flood. In 1956 the strip of land containing approximately 200 square yards on the Southern edge of the garden including the hedge was acquired by East Suffolk & Norfolk River Board without conveyance (compulsory purchase for possible works following the 1953 flood?). When Creek Cottage was sold to Ben and Rebecca Whiting this was with the exception of the strip of land acquired by East Suffolk & Norfolk River Board (now the East Suffolk Drainage Board) while an application for Adverse Possession was lodged, which was granted on (or about) 3rd November 2020.

There must be many photographs and paintings that have included the area in question, some inadvertently. Here are some comments on a few:

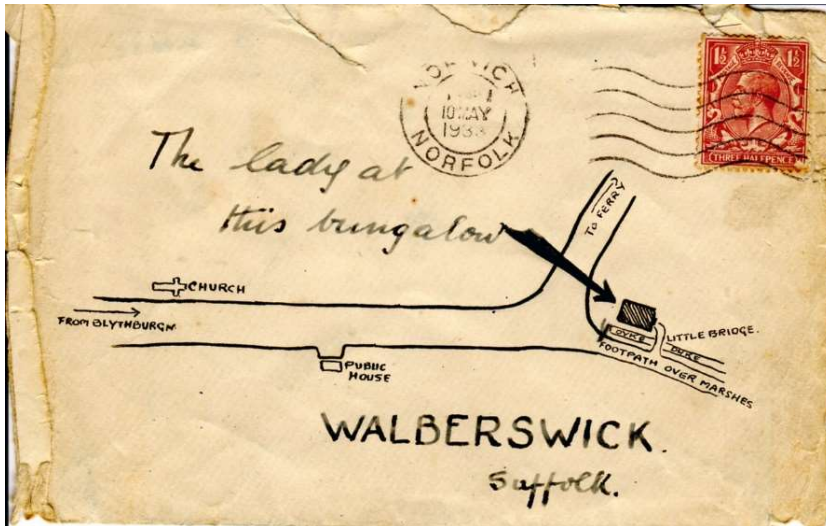
The white building in the photograph below appears to be on the site of Creek Cottage/Merville Bungalow but on closer inspection it does not look like either. Taken from near the current sluice gate a number of landmarks are visible, including The Terrace (built late 19th century), the original Anchor (taken down 1927), the mill and the church. The date of the picture is almost certainly before Merville Bungalow was built. Could it be the bungalow referred to in the 1911 entry in the deeds? It looks like that there could have been three buildings on the site? Edward Wright thinks that the detached house on the far left is Shirley, now called Millfield House. It was the first of the Millfield Road houses and seems to be the only one in the photo. The plot was sold in 1899 and the house was built soon afterwards; probably in 1900, and it was closely followed by several others that would have been visible from this viewpoint. For example we know for sure that Seahome (now Mulberry House) was inhabited in 1901 and Mill Croft was built by 1902. There is no sign of either of these so I think 1900 is the best estimate for the photo. The Conservation Area Appraisal says The Terrace is late 19th Century and it appears on the 1903 OS map so it is consistent with the 1900 date. The mill was certainly there in 1900 – there is a photo of it dated 1910 with the caption "In good working order".



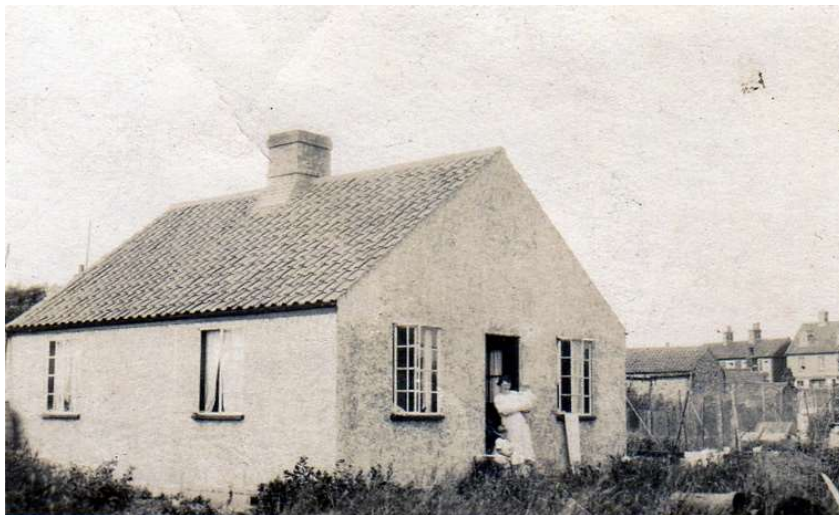
Could the picture to the left show Merville Bungalow under construction? The older boys are Ron and George English, dating this to around 1924. They seem to be sat on some substantial pipes which indicates it was not a riverside hut under construction. However, the pitch of the roof looks wrong.



This is the front of Ada's guest book. Despite primitive and cramped facilities many villagers let out rooms in their houses in the summer. This added significantly to the family income. Children would be consigned to tents or outhouses. The first entry is August 1932 and is obviously for Merville Bungalow. An entry in May 1939 by Mr R Trench-Smith refers to Beach View. Certainly they seem to have moved to Beach View before 1939 but after 1933 as indicated below.



A happy guest was also unsure about the name of the house but managed to get his letter delivered using a drawing of its location. The envelope is post-marked 1933 but sadly the contents are missing. When I showed this to Philip Kett he pointed out an interesting feature i.e. the little brook that ran alongside the path. The door to the house appears to be facing the sea as in the next photograph.



Is this Merville Bungalow or an early Creek Cottage? Houses at the top of the Green are clearly visible as the houses on the sea-side of the Green are not there yet. This probably dates the photo to the 1920's. The figures are not clear but if the babe-in-arms is

Owen and the young girl Peggy then this is round 1925.

Now let's allow some wild conjecture! Why one of the houses was called Merville Bungalow? The plot was probably owned by builder Bob English's father George and previously his mother Lydia. George had another son called Charles May English. Charles emigrated to Canada in 1904, aged 18. After 17 years he made the long journey home "to visit his parents" in November 1921 returning to Canada after 5 months in April 1922. This is around the time of the "tidal wave". Could Merville Bungalow have been built around then with the help of Charles? Merville is in the Comox Valley in British Columbia where Charles died (born 1886 Walberswick, died 1973, Comox, Vancouver Island). It was named after a place in France that Canadian soldiers used in WWI. Quite a coincidence? It will take some more digging in records to test any of this so for now it's just a good story.

History and Fiction meet again

Just a reminder to those with Netflix – coming next week, Cary Mulligan and Ralph Fiennes give local Suffolk history (Sutton Hoo) star treatment. Not going out? Give it a try.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dig_\(2021_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Dig_(2021_film))