



# WALBERSWICK

## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

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**NEWSLETTER NO: 65**

**Lockdown March 2021**

### Newsletter Editor's report

#### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

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

Here is the second issue of 2021 (2020 saw seven newsletters of which five were lockdown issues). We hope that there will not be the need for many more lockdown issues. However, we are gathering new material all the time, plus we have the archive, and if needs be we can rise to the occasion.

When I was small I remember my father talking about "the Spong Bridge". I knew the place he was referring to but, until this month, had never heard anyone else refer to The Spong. Now it appears that it was a place known to the artist and diarist Jessie Mabel Browton and others of her generation. I never knew her but it seems she lived just up the road in Blythwych Cottage, dying in 1972. Luckily we still have Philip Kett to put names and locations together and add some interesting history. We are also lucky to have Bill Ungless to help us with a map. Philip talks about the two Dunwich Rivers and other names for them. I recall my grandfather talking about "The Went", yet another name for the newer river that you do not hear now. There was also a story of a German pronunciation "The Vent" – I will ask Philip if he has any idea about this (when I next see him).

It's great to get feedback on newsletters and even better to get additional information. Philip Kett sent me the following on the "mystery" of Creek Cottage (see last newsletter).

Some forty years ago when I first started-out going self-employed I had a job of putting down a large concrete base to a shed. The concrete job was too big for me on my own and I enlisted the assistance of Leslie Goodwin, simply because he had a concrete mixer. During the job we talked about village history and Leslie said to me that the English family owned the whole of that plot of land that Hidden House to Creek cottage was built on. When hidden lane started to be developed, Ernst Freud bought a plot at the top end of the lane and on it he put a small wooden bungalow. It would seem that there had been some other developments started in the lane also at that time but nothing substantial. Leslie then indicated that the Bungalow that was at the bottom of the lane was moved in one piece, on rollers, to the present site of Hidden Hut. To facilitate this the not too substantial fences around the other plots were taken down and the shell of the bungalow was moved on rollers and the fences re-erected again afterwards. So it would appear that your missing Bungalow became the basis for Hidden Hut. Later, on that same piece of land, Hidden House was erected by Ernst Freud. This had been the Barn that had stood in Leverett's Lane beside what is now Toby Cottage where the Garage stands, as seen on the Scroll.

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## Jessie Mabel Browton

Jessie Browton, born in Bushey, Hertfordshire in 1882, lived in Walberswick at Blythwych Cottage and died in Ipswich, Suffolk in 1971. She was a member of the Walberswick Art Club 1947 – 1956. A full listing and copies of 49 of her paintings of local scenes can be found on the Walberswick website by clicking on the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/browton>. One of these paintings is reproduced below.



Ferry House on right. House on left and small cottage were both demolished by bomb in WWII. Goat in foreground and possibly Mrs Gilbert going towards her house 1936

Jessie Browton also wrote an extensive “diary” which is held in Southwold Museum. The History Group borrowed and scanned it for the archives. The diary mentions many place names, some of which are still familiar today, and some less so. We asked long-time resident and local expert, Philip Kett, to look at these place names and provide some detail. To assist, local artist, Bill Ungless, has marked these on a map.

## JESSIE BROWTONS DIARY: PLACE NAMES AND OTHER VILLAGE HISTORY - Philip Kett November 2020

1. **BIRD IN HAND FIELD:** the field in which the Village Hall now stands - **the allotments** have been there since around 1900.
2. **LAMPLAND MARSH:** is situated on the lower left side of **Stocks Lane**. The rent from this marsh was used to pay for the oil for the lamps in the **Old Church** which was situated across the lane about 100yds out in the field and about 100yds from the edge of the marsh. The Old Church was inundated by a flood some time before 1423. It was then demolished when the new Church was consecrated. The Old Church was built of wood on a flint footing. It is recorded that in 1752 the last remains were cleared from the field by the farmer and most probably lie under the bramble bush at the end of Stocks Lane, probably dragged there with horse power. The farmer’s name was Blakemore and his daughter Anne, a barmaid at the White Hart, Blythburgh, was murdered by Tobias Gill\* (Black Toby) in 1750 along the lane from Blythburgh by Deadman's Covert, supposedly

named after a suicide in the wood many years before. Lampland Marsh was owned by the Church and continued to be so until H Block builders in this village carried out some repairs to the roof of the Church. The Church had no funds to pay the debt and offered Lampland Marsh to clear the debt. This must have been just after the WWII in 1946 or thereabouts. I can remember helping my father cut the turf from the marsh to create 3 lawns at Poplar Cottage on the Green, home to Mr H Block.

\*Ed. There is some controversy about Toby's guilt - he would never have been convicted these days. Apparently even his accusers had second thoughts.

3. **HOIST COVERT:** Originally sold out of the estate in the early 1600s, to one Robert Hyst, somehow it succeeded getting back into the estate at a later date.
4. **SALLOW WALK COVERT:** Most probably sold out of the estate in the early 1600s, it had once been part of the WESTWOOD PARK, bought by John Sallows. He most probably walked it end to end daily. Somehow it succeeded getting back into the estate at a later date.
5. **WHINNEY PIECE:** This used to be an area of better grassland between the main Walberswick Road and **Lodge Road**. An area of approximately 10 acres, it was positioned east of the Bridleway that crosses the field between the two roads and half of the area seen today, which used to be two fields made into one field sometime after 2000.
6. **PAULS FENN and EAST MARSH:** Later became known as Westwood Marshes, in the 1500s before the area had been drained. Walberswick peasants used to graze their stock there. It used to extend from the remains of the Water Mill to beyond Westwood Lodge and into Blythburgh Fenn. Also the site of "Bloody Marsh", (1644) and the constant battle by the Lord of the Manor to keep the Walberswick peasants from using it. He built a house for his men and their dogs, to live in, in the corner of the East Hill, so that they could be ready to repel the peasants, and the three closest marshes to where the house was built bear the name of "Bloody Marsh" 1, 2, 3. One of the Lord of the Manor's men came into the village and a fight ensued, the man got badly beaten up and died and three Walberswick men were hung for the murder as a result. Their names were not recorded.
7. **GRAY'S WALL:** was built to close off Pauls Fenn and East Marsh, from East Hill through to Blythburgh Fenn, by Sir John Gray. The wall was built beside the stream that divides Walberswick from Westleton which runs out into the Dunwich River via a sluice through the wall that skirts the Dunwich River. The estate had been owned by Sir Roger de Swillington - when he died he left one son John who died aged 25 in the sixth year of Henry V (1419) and two daughters, Margaret and Anne. Margaret married Sir John Gray, she then became Lord of the Manor, who on her death released these estates to Sir John Hopton, who had married Anne the surviving daughter and sole heiress of Sir Roger Swillington.
8. **LADY ANNE:** the name given to a lane that goes nowhere in Hinton, where the best Primroses used to grow
9. **WESTWOOD MARSHES:** Natural drainage had been used but it was not good enough as it relied on the tides and only worked on the ebbs, so the higher ground of the Dunwich marshes drained first and not lowering the water sufficiently to allow the Westwood sluice to open. The Watermill was built and allowed the water to be raised to a higher

level, the raised water level forced open the sluice gate and the water drained out. With the Old Dunwich river blocked by the sea new drainage had to be found, so a drain was cut from the Watermill down to the river Blyth passing between what is now **the Allotments and Cliff Field**. As there was a problem with the ingress of the sea a sluice had to be built. On some early maps the Cut is known as Howlett's Cut, other names that it goes by are "The Creek" or "The New Dunwich River".

**10. WATERMILL:** Built in the early 1700s to drain water from Westwood marshes by means of a scoop wheel and out through a sluice. At the same time as draining the marshes the mill could grind corn as it had built into it a pair of mill stones. The ground corn or crushed oats was used was to feed the stock and horses, at Westwood Lodge. The Mill was never fitted with a fan tail to keep the sails into the wind, but had a winch fitted on to a Tail Pole. The chain on the winch was hooked over any one of a series of stakes set out around the Mill to turn the Mill into the wind. The Tail pole then had to be secured to two other posts to stop it swinging. Should the wind shift its direction the Mill had to be reset. The sails were made of canvas that laid on a wooden trellis and could be furled down the length of the sail arm to reduce the sail plan in stronger winds. The marsh that is now over the other side of the New Dunwich River goes by the name of "Doll's Marsh". Doll was the name of the horse that the marshman used to bring down to the mill from Westwood Lodge every day when he came to attend to the mill. The Tumbrel (a two wheeled cart) that Doll was harnessed to carried the corn that was to be ground that day. The sacks of corn were unloaded and stowed at the base of the mill, the horse unhitched from the Tumbrel and led down the bank and through the gate on to Doll's Marsh, (before 1939 and up to 1953 access to Doll's Marsh was possible as the ditch was only 4-feet wide with a proper gate and bridge, since 1953 when the New Dunwich River was dredged out that access has been lost). The Tumbrel is quite a small 2-wheeled farm cart and could be easily turned around on the wall by the marshman, the marsh wall from the East Hill up to the mill is double the width and therefore quite wide and certainly wide enough for a cart the size of a Tumbrel to be turned around on it. The sacks of corn for milling would have been winched to the upper stories of the mill whilst the mill was pumping water. They would have then been tipped into one of two hoppers that fed the pair of mill stones and the ground or crushed oats collected in sacks at ground level to take back to Westwood at the end of the day. The Watermill ceased to work during WWII and the marshes flooded. The military made sure that they would keep flooded. Along the Mill wall as one gets close to Little Dingle Hill there is a junction of three walls. With the threat of invasion this junction was blown up and later when the threat was over two bridges were made by the military out of scaffold poles, so there could be movement across the marshes. Later a clay wall was built around the blast site and several years later the blast hole was filled in and the wall was re-instated in its original place. During WWII the Water Mill had been used for target practice by the Military. After the war money was raised locally to get the Mill weather-proofed and tidied up and once again become a feature of Westwood marshes. In the 1960s some youngsters lit a fire in the top of the mill and it got severely damaged.

**11. WATERMILL COTTAGES:** at the beginning of the Mill wall on the eastern corner of East Hill once stood a pair of cottages for the marshmen and their families. These cottages they occupied up until the beginning of WWII (they can be seen on the Scroll). One family, the Muttitt's, moved into a new council house in Church Lane and the other family, the Westgates, moved into **The Shepherd's Cottage**<sup>a</sup>, that is the cottage tucked

under the hill just beyond Westwood Lodge. The Watermill Cottages were used for training purposes and demolished by the Military.

- 12. THE SLUICE:** There had been a bridleway for very many years leading to Dunwich before the Sluice was built in the 1700s. Today travelling from the Village Hall towards the beach, the cut or creek used to go under the track and run on the left side of the track towards the sea and then through a sluice. At some point in time the roadway slipped into the creek and a new sluice was built. What was left of the old sluice and creek became known as "The eel trap ditch". In 1953 after the flood the eel trap ditch was filled in with rubbish cleared up from around the village, this new land became extra gardens to **Creek Cottage and Longshore**. The new sluice then had to have a trackway over the top of the sluice and whilst it was being built there still had to be some form of drainage from the marshes, so some hollowed out trees were laid end to end at the end of the later cut for the creek, thereby draining the marshes whilst the new sluice was being built. Those hollowed out trees are still under the roadway and on the seaward side of the sluice.
- 13. THE SPONG:** is the name given to a narrow neck of land, at the bottom of Stocks Lane. Before the Westwood Marsh Mill was built and The Cut dug, this piece of land was a lot larger. Now it is cut into two parts, standing on the footpath and looking over the New Dunwich River to the muddy area beyond which was the Old Dunwich River. This area of Walberswick Key (Quay), launched on 26 April 1654 the Commonwealth ship "Basing" which was built here for the Navy of Oliver Cromwell. A 28-gun vessel built on Stocks and slipped into the water, she later became one of the 24 ships that started the Royal Navy under Samuel Pepys in 1660. Part of the slipway is buried in the mud, behind you lost in the reeds and grass are two pits, supposed to be saw pits used whilst building "Basing". Also on this site used to stand the warehouses of the Walberswick Traders who shipped their wares all around the North Sea and to The Faroe's and Iceland. They unloaded their ships of imports and fish from the North Sea and beyond. This area had been a trading base for Walberswick for many years but the sea gradually closed up the natural entrance to the Harbour and the river silted up. From the raised land at the Spong the marshes closer to the fields belong to the Lord of the Manor. The marshes between the New Dunwich River and the Old Dunwich River used to belong to The Church but since 1900 are now owned by Walberswick Common Lands Charity. The marshes beyond the Old Dunwich River belong to Dunwich Town Trust and the marsh wall was banked up in the 1400s.
- 14. BRIDGES ON THE NEW DUNWICH RIVER:** There are several bridges that cross the New Dunwich River. All of them were removed during WWII and had to be replaced again after hostilities had finished. Starting from the River end, the first one is **Wally's Bridge<sup>a</sup>** which was built 1964/5 when repairs were made to the Harbour entrance walls to allow lorries to cross the New Dunwich River. Then comes the **Kissing Bridge<sup>b</sup>**. The original bridge had been resited several years previously away from the Skates Nose when there was going to be improvements to the Harbour walls, in the 1930s. Southwold paid for a complete new Kissing Bridge, most probably because they had acquired the beach from the Harbour to the Cliff Field, (on an OS maps of 1922 this piece of land is known as Dunwich Detached No2) from Dunwich as restitution payment for a lawsuit, that Dunwich could not pay and Southwold helped them out. Needless to say it was a Walberswick man who was the cause of the problem and he won the day. It was all about a Beach Hut rental. This Bridge was taken down and stored in a garage of a house

close by, but later used by the military as fire wood. After WWII the Bridge was replaced but only by a flat one and the Kissing Bridge has gone forever. This new bridge was washed away again in 1953 and replaced again with a flat bridge. The next bridge is the **Sluice Bridge<sup>c</sup>** which had been built over the sluice when it was moved to the other side of the access track. There is a notion that Dunwich Town Trust paid for this first sluice to be built on this site. The access track enabled the Walberswick residents to access grazing for their stock on the Old Town Marshes going round the outside of Cliff Field and behind the Beach the track also went on to Dunwich. During WWII the Sluice had been made inoperative by the fitting of weir boards - this had the effect of damming the New Dunwich River and flooding all the marshes that it used to drain, including the Westwood Marshes right through to Blythburgh Fen. After the Sluice Bridge the next Bridge is known as the **White Bridge<sup>d</sup>** after someone painted it sometime before 1939. This bridge was at least 3-feet wide and had gates at either end to stop cattle crossing. In the early 1900s it had only been one plank wide with one hand rail, (what was known as a ligger bridge). It also stopped cattle crossing. Until the Water Mill had been built in the 1700s there had been a solid roadway here on to the back of the beach. As well as accessing the track to Dunwich, it was thought that one larger bridge would do. The next Bridge is known as **Stocks Lane Bridge<sup>e</sup>**. This bridge is not quite where it used to be before WWII as it used to be about 100 yards further along the river. It then accessed the land between the two rivers and by crossing the **Otter Bridge<sup>f</sup>** the path came back where it is today. It was decided to build the new bridge in a more accessible location. When the Old Dunwich River silted to the sea there became no drainage for it, so a ditch had to be cut between the Old Dunwich River and the New Dunwich River. This was done at the narrowest piece of land. The Bridge, was a wide affair to take a four-wheeled farm wagon, strong enough to carry out a load of Hay, that bridge stayed in situ throughout WWII and the flooding, only to be washed away in 1953. This was the access to the **Old Town Marshes** and for many years there was no easy access to them until the New Dunwich River was dredged out again. This time the drainage cut was filled in. Moving on the next bridge, still on the Spong, was known as **Wigg's bridge<sup>g</sup>**. The ground here is 6 ft. above the water level. Wigg had been the farmer living at Manor Farm before 1939. He had put in place this bridge to save him travelling down the Village Street and around Cliff Field to access the Old Town Marshes, which he hired from Walberswick Common Lands Charity. This bridge saved him considerable time, it was removed for WWII never to return. The last bridge on the New Dunwich River was situated across the river to Doll's Marsh. This was replaced after WWII and it stayed there for a few years until the river was dredged then it promptly fell in, when it was replaced it joined the footpath to the Mill Wall.

- 15. SHEEPYARDS:** There were three sheep yards in the fields around Walberswick. These are only really pounds to hold cattle or sheep in at night, which enabled their droppings to be collected, and they were sited usually close to the junctions of three or more fields, which made the carting of manure to those fields a lot easier. At the end of Seven Acre Lane is now a rough area where the Pillbox stands. Once known as **Holly Hills** up above the Marsh, at the bottom of the hill by the Marsh, is a grassy like meadow not very wide but wide enough for such a pound, known as **Hills yard<sup>a</sup>**. Travelling up Lodge Road past **Sallow Walk Covert**, the first field on the right used to be known as **Sallow Walk**. The next field on the right was known as **Elming Row**. Opposite the entrance to these fields across the road the field used to be known as **The Sheep yard<sup>b</sup>**. On the trackway from Eastwood Farm to Tinkers Farm there used to be another sheep yard<sup>c</sup> just

where the track takes a bend, just where the footpath joins the track, even when I was a youngster the Cow manure from Eastwood Farm used to be stored here ready to be spread on the fields close by.

- 16. FISH STREET or FISHER'S WAY:** was the old name for what is now known as The Street. The main road from the Church to the river Blyth.
- 17. KINGSHOLME:** was the name given to the Sand Bar that guarded the entrance to the Blyth.
- 18. SQUIRES HILL:** From **Palmer's Lane** the lane crosses the Common and passes Little Common Field the next field on the right is Squires Hill. When the **Bailey bridge** was first installed in 1947 the easiest way to get to the site of the defunct Railway Bridge was over Squires Hill. The Military that had put up the Bridge had laid down temporary steel mesh mats to stop the lorries rutting the soft ground. When the public first used the bridge they used Squires Hill much to the annoyance of the farmer who barred the entrance with gates, which got lifted off their hinges. The old Station yard which had been part of the Southwold Railway had to be cleared along with part of the track bed to join up with the rest of the path to Southwold. The Walberswick Station was built on land that originally belonged to the Squires Hill field.
- 19. WALBERSWICK COMMON:** Once owned by the Lord of the Manor, like most of the land in Walberswick. William Turrold was the sexton of the Church of Walberswick and he was also the Miller who worked the mill that had been erected on the Heath some years before. The mill was erected out on the Heath at the bottom of Church Lane some 200 yards from the boundary of the Heath. The area of 1 acre had been given to the Priest of the Church, on which to erect a corn-grinding mill. The area can still be made out today. It was triangular in shape and it was defined by a bank and ditch. The length of the 3 sides of a triangle means less work than 4 sides of a square. One day whilst going to attend to the Mill, William Turrold came across two men digging a ditch, around the cultivated fields. Thomas Mayhew and George Cricker, minor land holders in Blythburgh, had been put to work not far from the Mill. Going into the Mill he fetched out a quarter staff, having graynes at one end and a pike at the other and a sword at his side. He approached the two men and said "I forfend you working any longer heere, If you doe I will kill you if there were no more men in England". Then he made a thrust at Thomas Mayhew with the staff and "delivered five or six blowes with the said staffe, with which blowes he broake his said staffe and when he had done so he drew his sword at the said George Cricker and swore by the light of God that if we or any other man, aye if it were our great Master Sir Robert Brooke came there eyther night or day he would shoote a bullett in his sides, if he were hanged within an hour after". If it is to be believed, this was dangerous language indeed, and the accusation a serious one. The idea of tenants attacking their squire would have been seen as insurrection in the early seventeenth century, especially in this time of enclosures. So in 1636 or thereabouts Sir Robert Brooke had sent two men from Bythburgh to Walberswick to dig ditches and make a bank around his property excluding what is now known as "The Common". The bank coming off the corner of the last field on the right on leaving Walberswick and travelling across the Heath straight towards the end of the little piece of fen, that ditch and bank is still there today, as is most of the boundary ditch and bank around the Common thereby making sure that the villagers know their new limits of grazing, some 90 acres, reduced from 1500 acres. The Common is now owned by Walberswick Common Lands Charity on behalf of the residents of Walberswick.

**20. EASTWOOD LODGE:** the name given to the farm that is beside the road on leaving the village, it used to be known as “The Buildings” and had consisted of a cattle yard with covered buildings and some loose boxes to house cattle in, the object being that fattening the cattle there in winter which would then give the land around easy access to manure and save on time and labour hauling it from Westwood, the feed for these cattle would have been grown in the vicinity of “The Buildings”, it is not until the census of 1881 that a house had been built and people were living there, but the name did not seem to change until the 1950s, the original cattle yards had most probably been built at least in the 1700s when the whole farm was run from Westwood Lodge.

**21. ALDERMAN ROBERT BROOKE:** purchased Blythburgh, Walberswick and Westleton manors from Arthur Hopton in 1592 for the sum of £5,200. He was a successful London Grocer, and had the appearance of a self-made man seeking gentry status in the countryside but unfortunately it all appeared to go wrong for the family for three generations. Alderman Brooke’s main business interests remained in London, he was one of the wealthiest men in the Grocers Company. His sole intention was to bestow landed wealth on his son, which he did in 1597. His purchase of the Yoxford estate coincided with his son’s marriage. When he died in 1601 he was buried at St Mary Woolchurch next to the Mansion House. It was his son, Robert Brooke and his young bride Joan, who benefited from Alderman Brooke's wealth. Robert was 26 and his young bride Joan was just 17 when they married and took up residence in Suffolk. It appears that from then on the property of Westwood Lodge lost its status as the seat of the Lord of the Manor of Blythburgh and Walberswick. After his father’s death Robert's mother Ursula joined them at Cockfield Hall, Yoxford. There is evidence that Westwood Lodge was also undergoing change at this time. In 1602, immediately after the death of his father, Westwood Lodge Park was leased out for 21 years. The park was said to contain 240 acres with 700 trees and is marked on Saxton's map of Suffolk in 1575. The park was leased with all the enclosed ground lying in Blythburgh, Walberswick and Westleton, its out-buildings, orchards and gardens. The Brookes reserved the right to hunt with hawks in the park, but the lessee was allowed to kill all of the deer. Provision was made for building repairs and at first the Brookes came and stayed at Westwood as “resorters” but twelve years later in 1614 the house was let. Francis Colbie of Kenton purchased the lease of the park and the enclosed land for £198, so that improvements could be done to Cockfield Hall. Robert Brooke was knighted in 1608 itself a formal recognition of gentry status and became High Sheriff of Suffolk in 1614 at the age of 43. In 1618 his first wife Joan died and was buried in Yoxford church. Within two years he married a girl thirty years his junior, Elizabeth Culpepper, a cousin of his first wife. John Brooke the son of Robert Brooke inherited his father’s estate on his death in 1646 but John was short lived and it was his wife Jane Barnardiston who ended up running the estate until she married in 1660, to her sister's widower, William Blois of Grundisburgh. That's how the estate came into the Blois family.

### **Map to help locate above**

Bill Ungless has marked all the places mentioned on a map (see next page). This should make it easier to work out where they are in modern-day Walberswick. For those viewing in black and white we hope that you can still work it out! Those receiving this by email may like to print the last page to use while reading the article. Thanks Bill and Philip for all your work.



