

WALBERSWICK

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO: 53
FEBRUARY 2018

NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S REPORT

APPEAL FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS - Places on the Committee will become vacant at the History Group's AGM on 24th April, 2018, as a result of the retirement of The Secretary and possible retirement of The Chairman and Treasurer. If you are interested in joining the Committee, please contact the "Acting" Secretary by email (patlancaster@btinternet.com) or by telephone (01502 724268) for more information.

Philip & Pat Kett – Chairman and Treasurer: It is difficult to think of The History Group without the obvious inclusion of Philip and Pat but both have decided that the time has come to step down at the AGM unless sufficient new Committee members are found. As the retiring Secretary said: *“The History Group Members and village owe them a debt of gratitude for keeping the History Group alive after Philip took over as Chairman 11 years ago, as they do Pat. The Group is something special and a great village asset and should not be allowed to close”*. I can only add my personal thanks to both Philip and Pat and am sure it is echoed throughout the village.

Alan Walpole – Secretary: Alan retired from the Committee and as Secretary on 31st December 2017. Here is an extract from the letter of thanks he wrote to the Chairman on his retirement: *Thank you for your kind words of appreciation. I have enjoyed working with you and our association has been both amicable and “easy going”. I am also grateful that some of your great knowledge of the village has “rubbed off” on me over the years. I also thank the Committee for their generous “leaving” present that is greatly appreciated.*

Alan Porter – Treasurer: Sadly Alan passed away on Wednesday 22nd November 2017. He had recently taken on the role of Treasurer and shall be very sadly missed. The Group send their condolences to his wife, Ann, and daughter, Sarah.

Pat Lancaster

MEMBERSHIP

Annual Subscriptions are now due. If you have not already paid, please contact Maureen Thompson as soon as possible on 01502 723755, (address: Greenways, The Green, Walberswick) with your subscription which is £7.50.

Maureen Thompson

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

AGM
April 2018

Tuesday 24

NAT LE ROUX WILL GIVE A TALK ON
“THE HISTORY OF WEST WOOD GARDEN
May 2018

Saturday 19

PIP WRIGHT WILL GIVE A TALK ON
“WITCHES IN SUFFOLK”

Saturday 20

CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH – FACT AND FICTION

On Saturday 21st October 2017 WLHG members and guests packed into the Village Hall for a talk by two local experts on Charles Rennie Mackintosh (CRM). Bill Ungless, architect and artist, and author Esther Freud shared the floor for a highly entertaining and informative evening which gave us an insight into the man, his works and the circumstances that shaped his life. The story of CRM and his association with Walberswick is well known, some evidence-based, some resting on oral history and some confused. This includes the infamous incident that caused CRM to be arrested as a German spy, cleared but then banished from the three counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. Local folklore has it that the sister of Dinks Cooper was directly responsible for starting the investigation that led to the arrest. An ex-mayor of Southwold saw fit to issue an apology many years after. By then CRM was long impervious to the insult and had possibly already forgiven the village he made his home for a year.

When I set the title "CRM - Fact and Fiction" it seemed a good and snappy way of linking the evening's talks. I had no idea how well the two talks would come together and provide a unified insight into the man and the woman that shared his life. Bill started off with his life and works in Glasgow. Esther then addressed the research for her novel "Mr Mac and Me" and read an extract from her book. Bill then returned for more life and works. However, both conveyed an emotional content that made the facts so much more interesting and CRM more human, a flawed genius.

I could not possibly detail the talks. It really is a case of needing to have been there on the night. Anyway, as far as the facts go, CRM has been the subject of a previous WLHG Newsletter. Please go back and read Richard Scott's excellent "Charles Rennie Mackintosh – Visits to Walberswick". If you do not have this then fire up your computer, navigate to the Village website, and find WLHG Newsletter number 42 or paste the following into your browser: <http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/assets/WLHG/WLHG-news-letters/HNL42Sep2012.pdf>. Richard is a brilliant art historian and the facts are there for you to re-visit. Esther's book can be found in any of our local book shops. I will be reading my copy again with renewed interest.

What I would now like to do is focus on local oral-history records that I feel possibly could indicate a poignant local end to Mackintosh's life – more fact and fiction (or is it?). After the talks I said to Bill something like "after all that it's interesting that CRM came back to the village after the war". Bill turned to me and said "but did he?" We had both read the same source for this assumption, which is in "Remembering Charles Rennie Mackintosh" by Alistair Moffat and Colin Baxter. Bill clearly had his doubts and after some investigation I also found the recollection strange.

The book includes records of conversations between the author, Alistair Moffat, and people who new or had met CRM. The book is divided into five parts, these being Glasgow (1868-1914), Walberswick (1914-15), London (1915-23), France (1923-27) and finally London (1927-28). The so-called Walberswick years are covered by Mary Newbery Sturrock, Blucher English and Ginger Winyard (though the latter may not be 1914-15).

Moffat only got to Sturrock in the nick of time as he interviewed her in 1985 and she died the following year. Mary was the daughter of the couple who introduced CRM to Walberswick. Her account fits with other sources but asserts that CRM was not a drunk. However, I am struck by the title of a review by author Alistair Moffat of another book about CRM to which the Newbery's daughter also contributed memories (CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH by James Macaulay). The review is headed "Where Did It All Go Wrong?" That's the feeling I had listening to Bill and Esther (not about their talk but about CRM). As an aging rock fan CRM seemed to share many rock-star attributes of a rise, fall and a premature death. The analogy is probably not fair as CRM remained true to his beloved wife, Margaret, and also had The Great War as a back-drop. Getting back to the record it seems that CRM was no stranger to Walberswick when he arrived for the 1914-15 period of his life. Sturrock records that her family purchased a house in Walberswick (Roofree) around 1900 and that The Mackintoshes stayed in the adjoining property (Millside). Richard Scott says there is good evidence that in 1905 the Mackintoshes stayed long enough at Seascap (current name) on the Green to become close to the Thompson family. Margaret Thompson (later Orbell) asserted that her mother was so fond of Margaret Mackintosh that she was named after her. As Margaret Thompson was not born until 1910 then this was indeed a tribute to the summer of 1905 or, more likely, suggests further visits to the village between 1905 and 1910.

The second piece of oral history was contributed by Blucher English. Blucher (William) was born in 1907 making him about seven at the start of WWI. His account of following CRM sounds authentic even if the reference to Margaret Thompson's mother may be a detail from an earlier visit. It is the testimony of a boy who was only seven at the time. Blucher was the father of Jane English, later to

1907 making him about seven at the start of WW1. His account of following CRM around authentic even if the reference to Margaret Thompson's mother may be a detail from an earlier visit. It is the testimony of a boy who was only seven at the time. Blucher was the father of Jane English, later to become Jane Tibbles. Esther's book includes a character with the name of Tibbles but then the book is a work of fiction! As far as we know, there were no Tibbles in Walberswick 1915.

The third Walberswick memory was provided by Ginger Winyard. Ginger at the time of the story was the son of the landlord of The Anchor. Ginger tells of CRM turning up unannounced at The Anchor one night and having to share a bed with Ginger as there was no other room available. This arrangement continued for days or weeks (it is not clear). On a first reading I just took the story at face value as an interesting anecdote and like some others assumed it took place in the 1914-15 visit. There are no dates in Ginger's account but there is an interesting comment concerning why CRM was at The Anchor. He says that he used to stay at Millside but could no longer do this as the owners (Nichols family) had moved to Wenhaston. This places the incident after 1915 and after CRM had been banished. Ginger would have known this was the case anyway as he himself was not born until 1916. In addition, his father, Jack Winyard, did not take over The Anchor until 1924 when Ginger would have been about 8 years old. Hans Lange in his history of The Blue Anchor dates the incident as 1925 or 1926. He is likely to have got his account from Ginger or a re-telling from someone Ginger told. Ginger describes a man in an overcoat (though it was June or July?) shuffling between the two pubs "all night long", talking to himself and known to everyone. Described as not a smart man he frankly sounds a bit of a mess visually and mentally. Ginger could shed no light on the purpose of his visit. If he was painting then no record has survived. I knew Ginger from when he ran the original Tuck Shop, now the Black Dog deli, before it moved up the street. He was a respected man of sound mind and unlikely simply to make things up. However, it just seems so unlikely that CRM should turn up without booking and without his wife from the south of France where they were living at that time. The cost of such a trip, with no purpose other than a few drinks in The Bell and Anchor, makes no sense.

There is another explanation that occurs to me. I have no evidence and therefore it is completely fanciful but it allows the recollection to be broadly correct. CRM and his wife returned to London from France in the summer of 1927 as both he and Margaret were ill. From London CRM could easily have made an impulsive visit to Walberswick, alone and unannounced. Ginger's description is of an ill and confused man dressed for weather colder than June or July. The old Anchor closed towards the end of 1927 when the new Anchor opened in an area behind it. Perhaps CRM visited in the autumn of 1927 just before the old Anchor closed? Perhaps this prematurely-aged and ill man chose to return to a place of happiness from his past – not Glasgow but Walberswick? It is a sad picture but, if true, reflects well on Walberswick. Maybe people have dwelt too much on the trauma of his removal from East Anglia and not enough on the safe haven Walberswick provided for an already damaged man. It would be nice to think that CRM had worked out that it was a dreadful war and not Walberswick that was at fault. Where did it all go wrong? Certainly before he arrived in Walberswick in 1914.

In 2013 a former mayor of Southwold issued an apology to the CRM Society about Mackintosh's treatment. I am not sure if the CRM Society felt this was needed but they were happy to accept the gesture. The apology I feel may have been part publicity stunt to advertise the local connection with the now world-famous artist. Like so many artists CRM is generating more interest dead than alive. CRM was incensed with his arrest at the time but, if he did return to Walberswick in 1927, then he had surely rationalised the whole thing. If he was owed an apology it should be from the people that drove him to take refuge in Walberswick and a war that claimed the lives of millions. Putting it into perspective he got away lightly and as the war became a disaster perhaps he saw this. Then again, this may all be fiction!

John English

UPDATE ON JOHN DOMAN TURNER'S SOUTHWOLD SCROLLS

The last Newsletter (no. 52) was largely devoted to the Walberswick scroll, painted by John Doman Turner in 1931. This can be viewed in all its splendour at least twice a year and showings are well advertised. In Richard Scott's article on the artist he mentioned two other local scrolls, one painted before and the other after the Walberswick scroll and both of parts of Southwold. This short article is to bring you up-to-date with what has been happening with the Southwold scrolls since Richard wrote his article.

The answer for the first scroll, the Ferry Road scroll, is no change. As Richard reported – "*The original Southwold scroll is kept in the town's museum, but unfortunately it is too fragile for public showing, even by arrangement*". All well and good as long as you do not want to see it. Hopefully a benefactor might step forward before it finally disintegrates and pay for it to be restored. This is sort of what happened with the third scroll, the Trinity Fair scroll. That benefactor was Adnams and a very good job they made of it too. We have them to thank for preserving this delightful piece of work. Again to quote Richard Scott – "*...this one can be viewed by arrangement. It is wall-mounted, behind UV glass, in the function room at The Swan Hotel in Southwold*".

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Well, the above was the case with the third scroll but there has been a change. As many people will know, The Swan in Southwold recently re-opened after a protracted refurbishment. Alas, the scroll is no longer in the function room as described by Richard. At first I feared that it had disappeared as staff on reception had no idea what I was talking about when I enquired. Eventually I was taken upstairs to the bedroom landings and there it was! Oh what a relief but a relief tinged with some disappointment. It transpired that during the refurbishment the scroll was divided up into segments and distributed between bedroom doors and corridors on not one but two floors. A section of historically-interesting signatures have disappeared from view altogether (they are in storage). While it is important to stress that this priceless piece of art is still there and still preserved (though no longer a scroll) there are some concerns including:

- It is no longer a scroll and is divided up between bedroom doors, corridors and floors
- It is not so easy to view as it is now in a residents-only part of the hotel
- It is in narrow corridors making viewing harder
- Some sections are above radiators and could be affected by heat
- Some sections are opposite windows and could be subject to light damage

WLHG committee members John English and Pat Lancaster have been in touch with Adnams who have been very helpful in discussing the situation. Our ex-Bell publican and WLHG member, Nick Attfield has inherited the Trinity Scroll as part of his area of management at Adnams. Discussions are ongoing. We know the problems but we need to identify some possible solutions. It would be a shame if the scroll now deteriorated. If you want to see it in its current position then this can be arranged. If you come across a problem then let Pat know via the WLHG.

John English December 2017

REYDON ALMS HOUSES BY FRANK JENNINGS 1908

There are a dozen or so houses in Walberswick which were built by the architect Frank Jennings. These date from about 1900 to the time of WW1. Not only are they attractive, in the Arts and Crafts style, but they contain historic artefacts built into them. For example there are two Jacobean staircases in the village, among much else. Indeed, three medieval houses in Lavenham were demolished and carted on haywains to Walberswick, then reconstructed as Mercers Hall in the Street. This is all well documented in the DVD called ‘Frank Jennings Architect and Magpie’ (still available price £5).



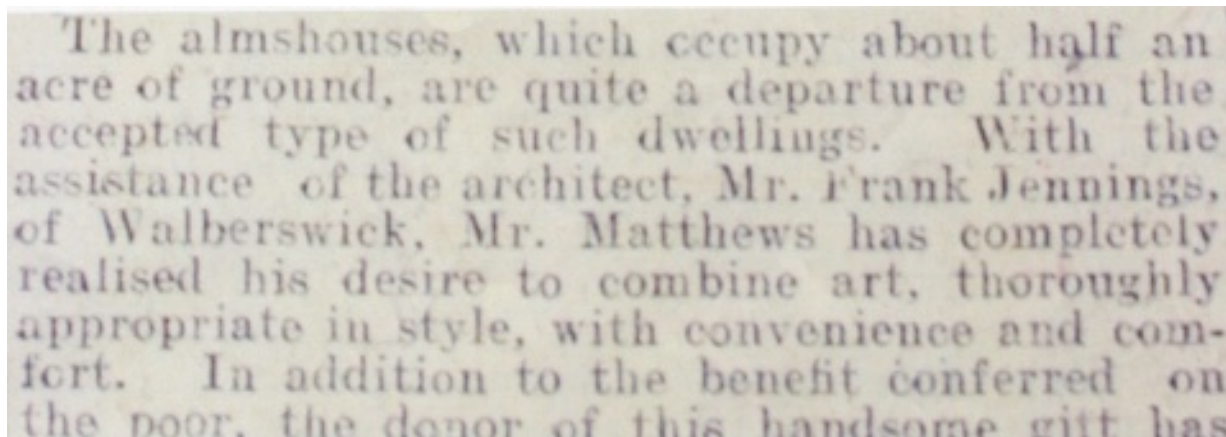
What was not known at the time of the DVD was that Jennings had also built some Alms Houses in Reydon. However, recently Stephen Wells of the Southwold Museum and Historical Society has kindly given to the WLHG two pieces of evidence which demonstrate that this is the case.

Known as ‘The Rest’ the Alms Houses are in Covert Road, Reydon, (off Might Road, just beyond the Village Hall). They have distinctive round conical-roofed ‘gate-houses’, and comprise four separate houses. Their appearance has changed little on the outside since they were built, but of course they have been greatly modernised inside. These grade 2 listed buildings are still run by a charity for local older residents.

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The first piece of evidence is an extract from a news journal of 1908. This shows that Mr (Andrew) Matthews (who was a benefactor and who was the first person to be invested with the Freedom of the Borough of Southwold) financed the project, which was for the benefit of the poor. It also names the architect Frank Jennings.



The almshouses, which occupy about half an acre of ground, are quite a departure from the accepted type of such dwellings. With the assistance of the architect, Mr. Frank Jennings, of Walberswick, Mr. Matthews has completely realised his desire to combine art, thoroughly appropriate in style, with convenience and comfort. In addition to the benefit conferred on the poor, the donor of this handsome gift has

The second piece is a photograph of Mr Matthews, his two sons, and Frank Jennings standing by the door to one of the gate-houses which is in fact a store. It is a pleasure to run the eye from the brick base, to the recessed brickwork above, the stone band incised with lettering, the projecting brickwork and finally to the elegantly shaped plain-tiled roof capped with a lead pinnacle having a mushroom capping. The door was specially made to follow the curved plan. The four houses have Flemish gables and are built of similar tiles and brick to the gate-houses. They sit very happily together and give off a feeling of well-being and security.

Well worth a visit
Bill Ungless



THE NEWSON FAMILY

THE NEWSON FAMILY

After reading the last Newsletter (No 52, Sept 2017) I thought the Newson family required more explanation as the newspaper cutting did not do them justice.

The Newson family were from Victoria Street in Southwold and are related distantly to one “Ginger” Newson who also had a Bakery on the corner of Park Lane and South Green, Southwold. The family consisted of Mr and Mrs Newson Snr, with children Benny, Winnie and another sister who worked in the shop in Victoria Street whose name I do not remember as she never came to Walberswick. The three children never married and only lived for work. From 1941, when the Pontoon Ferry closed, until 1947 when the Bailey Bridge was erected, Benny and Winnie used to drag the hand cart in the picture (Newsletter No 52) down Ferry Road to the Ferry stage. The handcart loaded full inside, with wicker baskets tied on to the top and also balanced on the shafts loaded to the brim with bread and confectionery. Slung under the cart was a drawer where the goodies were kept - “Sweets”. During the time of sugar rationing there always seemed a supply of sweets to be had if one had the necessary coupons, sometimes they sort of materialised. There was some treats that did not need coupons, namely liquorice bootlaces which are derived from the roots of the liquorice bush, still grown and processed around Pontefract today.

At the rowing boat ferry the cart was unloaded, the bread in the baskets taken across first and loaded into another identical cart with the empty baskets being refilled with the contents from the interior of the cart, and so the delivery would begin. They had to be back at the rowing boat before the ferry closed. In 1941 there were not too many houses in the village but by 1947 building was getting underway.

In 1947 the Bailey Bridge was erected and life became a bit easier for the Newsoms. For a few years they used a pony and trap until they were asked not to use the bridge as it was for pedestrians and cyclists. About a year ago I was loaned a photo of the cart festooned with children from Church Lane – it is shown below but as a reduced version and therefore not the best.

My first recollections of the Newsoms start when I was about nine years of age, my parents had just moved from No 4 Church Lane to a new house at the bottom of the lane where I live today. Benny or Winnie called round with the bread three times a week. Benny was tall, angular and slim, looked as if he could do with a square meal or two, and sported a wispy ginger beard more like a cartoon character. Winnie on the other hand was shorter with a round smiling face always one for a laugh. These were the days before women wore trousers as the norm and she must have suffered terribly from the cold.

In 1957 they gave up the bread delivery service, as it was the beginning of mass produced bread as we know it today.

Philip Kett



Front: Margaret Long. Back in trap, left to right: Graham English, Ann Connick, Trevor Connick.

Front in trap Christine Denny.

All lived in Church Lane circa 1948/50

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PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE DIARIES OF JESSIE M BROWTON

