



WALBERSWICK

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO: 55

MARCH 2019

Newsletter Editor's report

The Christmas celebration talk by *Harry Edwards "Arabella gets a kick out of the seaside"* possibly broke all attendance records as we just about used every chair we could find. Harry did not disappoint his audience and we had numerous "complaints" afterwards from those unable to attend. By popular request Harry is doing it again (see below). I have also asked Harry to include some anecdotes in an article for the next newsletter.

In the last newsletter I appealed for new articles. I am pleased to say that Nat le Roux and Edward Wright have both produced great pieces of original research that put the "history" into WLHG. If there is a theme to this newsletter it might be "people and places".

We still need to find out more from Walberswick past. September marks the 80th anniversary of the arrival of WW2 evacuees. Some stayed at Kuruman, now Millstones. There is a little information on the village website and in the two Suffolk Memories books. There must be more out there. Photos and/or memories please to anyone on the committee or via the web site.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Harry Edwards WILL REPEAT HIS TALK ON "Arabella gets a kick out of the seaside" in The Anchor Barn on Friday 15th February at 7.30pm. Please be aware that this "encore" is not a WLHG event. It is a "fund-raiser" for the Heritage Hut and WLHG members will have to pay the same as non-members.

Dr. Ronald Binns WILL GIVE A TALK ON "Orwell in Southwold (and Walberswick)" in the Village Hall Saturday 30th March 2019 at 7:00 pm - See the book review late in this newsletter

The first of our major articles is a follow-up to Nat le Roux's talk to the group last year.

The History of Westwood Garden - Nat le Roux

Part 1 – The Creation of the Garden

Westwood garden sits at the apex of the triangle of land formed by the junction of The Street and Lodge Road. There are two dwellings on the site: Eastwood, fronting onto The Street at the junction with Palmer's Lane and Westwood, fronting onto Lodge Road. The history of the garden is bound up with the history of both houses, and it has at different times been attached to each of them.

Jekyll and Weaver describe the garden as follows:

In nothing is there opportunity for greater skill than in the treatment of small sites of irregular shape, such as that shown in Fig. 86. Eastwood Cottage, Walberswick stands on a narrow tongue formed by two converging roads and Mr A Winter Rose has made the most of an awkwardly-shaped plot by breaking it up into several features of interest. The east corner is laid out as a rock garden, to which access is given from the sunk walk that runs along the north boundary. It is entered between a pair of masonry piers and the flagged path, broadly stepped, is in good accord with the rockwork. Its southern end is approached along a path, flanked by broad herbaceous borders, which skirts the angled seat shown in Fig 87. Other good points about this garden are a little bird bath in the form of a circular canal and a pigeon-cote adapted from an old tool shed.

The ground plan is essentially unchanged today, and many of the features which Winter Rose designed are still present: the sunk walk with its masonry piers; the angled seat and the bird bath. Some of these structures incorporate carved stonework apparently salvaged from the ruins of St Andrews, or possibly from the earlier medieval church at the end of what is now Stocks Lane. Other features have been altered: the area described as the Rock Garden was partially levelled and remodelled at some point in subsequent years and the pigeon-cote, still extant in a rather dilapidated state in the 1990s, has been replaced by a thatched summer house.

There are also obvious differences in the planting. The areas labelled 'Herbaceous', 'Herbs' and 'Asparagus' on the plan must have been open, sunny sites in 1912 but are now shaded by mature trees. We do not know whether the scheme in Winter Rose's plan was followed in every respect, nor what specific plants grew here in Rendall's lifetime, nor how they were positioned. There is some limited anecdotal evidence: according to Walberswick residents in the 3rd quarter of c. 20th the garden was known as The Lily Garden, because lilies grew in profusion. Turk's Cap lilies - *Lilium Martagon* – are naturalised in the garden today, together with a few survivors of the Crinums which we know were here in larger numbers in the 1950s.

The treeless state of the site in the early c. 20th is confirmed by the circumstances of Charles Rennie Mackintosh's arrest as an enemy spy in the autumn of 1914. Mackintosh and his wife were living in the cottage at the east end of the Westwood building ('Caretaker's Cottage' in Fig. 1), presumably as guests or tenants of Arthur Dacres Rendall. It was from a bedroom window at the side of the house that Mackintosh allegedly shone a light out to sea, supposedly as a signal to German ships offshore. This would not be possible from the same window today: trees now block any view of the sea. He was observed by a servant girl working in the house across the road – now Green Gates – and reported to the authorities. Returning from a walk, Mackintosh was arrested at the front door of Westwood and his room was searched. After a period under house arrest, he was banished from the Eastern Counties for the duration of the war.

In 1913 Rendall acquired further land to the west of Eastwood Cottage. An extension to the existing garden was laid out in this area, probably in the early 1920s and also to a design by Algernon Winter Rose. The area is divided by a double yew hedge, still extant today, between a rose garden and a sunken pool garden. No contemporary plan of these gardens has survived, and Winter Rose did not live to oversee their construction. After distinguished service in France with the Essex Yeomanry, he died in the influenza epidemic of 1918 at the age of 33. Winter Rose's career as an architect and garden designer lasted only nine years, cut short by the outbreak of war. He achieved a great deal in that time. There are other examples of his work in *Gardens for Small Country Houses* including Goodrich House and Morton House in Hatfield, Millfield in Brentwood and Kelsale Manor near Saxmundham. We also know that Winter Rose worked alongside Lutyens at Marsh Court in Hampshire, where he was responsible for the outbuildings. The best preserved example of his work is perhaps Upton House in Newnham, Cambridge: a large private house built in 1912. The gardens of Upton House, which are substantially unchanged, contain structures similar to those at Westwood, including a stone & tile pergola and a sunk pool with square paving.

A plaque in the nave of St Andrews, Walberswick commemorates Algernon Winter Rose and his parents: his mother is buried in the churchyard.

Arthur Dacres Rendall died in 1936. He never married and had no children. He bequeathed Eastwood, Westwood and the gardens to Geoffrey Wincott (1901 – 73), a theatrical producer, radio announcer and actor who appeared in minor roles in various TV dramas of the 1960s, including Dixon of Dock Green and the Peter Cushing version of Sherlock Holmes. It seems Wincott's interests did not extend to gardening, and the Westwood garden seems to have been allowed to run down in the late 1930s. It was completely neglected during the subsequent war years. Between 1941 and 1946/7 Eastwood and Westwood were occupied by the military, together with many other houses in Walberswick, and it seems fairly certain that the forestation of the oldest part of the garden began in that period. Hedges were allowed to grow into trees, and new trees self-seeded in locations which no gardener would have chosen. Some of these would have been well established by 1947, and one can understand why they were then allowed to remain. The character of the garden was changed.

Part 2 – The Mea Allen era and afterwards, will appear in the next newsletter.

Our second major articles is also about a Walberswick landmark and is the first part of a series.

The Early Years of Millfield Road - Edward Wright

In 1889 at an auction sale in Halesworth, William Howard purchased a “valuable small estate” in Walberswick for £610. As well as a farmhouse, now called Old Farm it had roughly 6 acres of land to the South of the Street; “Mill Field” and “Home Field”. Howard was the founder of Howard Brothers, the family run timber business that provided Elizabeth Jane Howard with the framework on which she created the Cazelet chronicles. One of William Howard's brothers Alexander was the inspiration for the Brig in those stories.

William Howard came from a poor family but by the time he bought Old Farm he was a successful timber merchant. At sixteen he had started working for a small timber yard on the banks of Bow Creek in East London. In 1876, having borrowed £1,500, he bought the business. As it expanded, his brothers joined him and the firm took advantage of the high demand for timber in Britain and abroad.

Howard's plan was to divide Mill Field and Home Field into building plots but it was ten years before he made his first sale. I believe the delay was caused by a legal problem; some of the land was freehold and the remainder was copyhold. Copyhold was a traditional tenure of manorial land; the copyholder had ownership but only a copy of the entry on the roll held by the manor. Purchasers of building plots would want a freehold title and to acquire this Howard needed to be enfranchised by the manor. He achieved this in 1899.

Howard divided the land into thirteen plots, each large enough for a substantial house. He imposed only limited restrictions on the purchasers; each house must cost at least £400 and the elevations were to be approved by Howard's agent. By 1904 six houses had been built, by at least three different



architects. The houses are a mixture of styles but each one shows something of its time. Arts and Crafts influences, some very modern building techniques and of course Frank Jennings with his sense of history and his confident panache. By 1925 the number of houses had increased to twelve. The picture above is a view of the windmill, St Andrew's tower and some early Mill Field houses.

Howard's first purchasers were Edwin and Alice Mullins. They paid £200 for two adjacent plots and built Shirley, now Millfield House (see Shirley below, circa 1901, standing in isolation. You can see the rear of the original Anchor to the right).

Edwin (E. Roscoe Mullins) was in his early fifties and well established as a sculptor in London (see below "Sisters" by E. Roscoe Mullins 1904). It was hoped that the fresh air of Walberswick would help him cope with the breathing difficulties that had troubled him for years and were later diagnosed as emphysema. Edwin and Alice knew Walberswick well, having holidayed in the village many times.



They chose their friend Robert Stark Wilkinson to design the new Shirley. Alice had grown up in Shirley, Surrey and had married in the parish church. The house would have had clear views of the sea to the East; the trees and shrubs that are now such a feature of the road were a later introduction. Robert Stark Wilkinson was known for his commercial buildings rather than houses; Doulton's head office in Lambeth being the most famous of his designs.



Edwin's father, Edward had been a solicitor. On the face of it he was successful and financially secure. This was far from the case; when he died at the age of forty-six his pregnant wife discovered that she and her six children were virtually bankrupt. Edward's partner had been defrauding the firm's clients for years and Edward had been doing his best to repay them.

Edwin was five years old at his father's death and was sent to an orphanage in Wanstead. A few years later his mother Elizabeth died and at the age of fourteen Edwin was truly an orphan. After his death his family presented the orphanage with his sculpture "Mother and Child" because he had told them of his gratitude for the education he had received.

Edwin, Alice and their children were often at Shirley in the early years of the new century. By 1904 Edwin's health had deteriorated and he seems to have found Walberswick more restful than London.

The winter of 1906/7 was a harsh one in Walberswick. Edwin, Alice, their daughter Ida (21) and youngest son Jack (14) arrived at Shirley on the 21st December for the Christmas holidays. The older boys, Claud (19) and Geoffrey (17) arrived one day later. On Christmas Eve Mrs Foster, a neighbour held a party with games and dancing and on Christmas Day the family attended the morning service at St Andrew's and walked on the common.

Boxing Day brought a violent storm, with record snowfall in Suffolk. Keeping warm in a large house like Shirley must have been difficult in the absence of electricity or central heating. Claud was summoned to London by a telegram from a possible employer and he and Geoffrey decided to set off in a trap. They soon learned that the Halesworth line was closed by the snow but the following day they managed to drive to Darsham and take the train to London. Ida returned to London on New Year's Eve, leaving Alice and the young Jack to care for Edwin alone.

On the 5th January a letter arrived in London from Alice to say that the children would “be sorry to see how poorly” Edwin had become. Later that night she called out Dr Mullock from Southwold who diagnosed a collapsed lung.

The doctor was very concerned about Edwin and about Alice’s exhaustion and suggested hiring a nurse to help with the nights. By now, Alice had managed very little sleep for at least six days. On the 9th January the three older children, still in London received a telegram from Alice saying that they must come by the ten o’clock train the next day. Dr Mullock was called at 6.30 pm and apparently he arrived instantly. Edwin died of emphysema four hours later. The next morning Claud, Geoffrey and Ida took the train from Liverpool Street in the company of a lady called Van Raalte; the nurse. At Colchester the stationmaster handed them a telegram that read, “Please stop Nurse Van Raalte. Patient dead”. This was how Claud, Geoffrey and Ida received the news of their father’s death.

The nurse returned to London and the children completed the train journey to Halesworth where they took a trap to Shirley. The family spent the next few days walking and receiving support from close family and friends. They made wreaths, which were placed with Edwin’s coffin in his bedroom where they held their own family service. The coffin was then moved down to the sitting room and on the 14th the Walberswick vicar RP Wing conducted a service there, attended by villagers and friends. Edwin’s coffin was taken in a hearse to Darsham and on to London and Hendon Park Crematorium.

Jack, the baby of the family, joined the TA and was called up in 1914. He was transferred to the Royal Flying Corps and was killed in a plane crash while training in Wiltshire in 1915 at the age of 23.

Claud went on to become a well-known lawyer, author and speaker. He campaigned for reform of the legal system in its treatment of the poor and its attitude to the breakdown of marriages. A pioneer of birth control and marriage guidance he managed to irritate the church, parliament and the judiciary. Despite, or perhaps because of this many of his ideas are received wisdom now.

Note: I have started to research the owners and occupiers of the early 20th Century houses in the village. Many people are helping me with this project and to save repetition I will acknowledge and thank them all at its conclusion, when I shall also cite my sources. In the meantime I would just like to say thank you to two people. Firstly, Anne Horsbrough of Millfield House who generously allowed me to take copies of her deeds and, secondly, Emma Dally, Edwin and Alice’s great-granddaughter. Emma has written a fascinating book about Claud, “Claud Mullins, Rebel, Reformer, Reactionary”. Emma has allowed me to draw extensively from it.

It is not too difficult to find out about the people who built these houses but much harder to discover the stories of those who worked for them and often spent more time in the village than their employers. Any assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Book Review: Orwell in Southwold by Ronald Binns

If you are in the habit of visiting Southwold pier then you must have seen the mural referring to George Orwell. This reminder of Orwell’s association with Southwold is overdue as he has largely been ignored by the town that was home for many of his formative years as a writer and man. Orwell (or Eric Blair as he was then) seems not to have been keen on Southwold and its people and some did not like him much either. It reminds me of living in Nottingham many years ago and the way they felt about DH Lawrence. Like them or not both men went on to write books that made them famous, changed attitudes and changed our language. Some people may not appreciate that “Big Brother” comes from a novel, 1984, and that “fake news” is not a million miles away from “Orwellian” ideas.

The Blairs arrived in Southwold in 1921 and had an association for more than 20 years. Ronald Binns covers these years and documents places and people important in the life of Eric Blair/George Orwell. However, in reading this short but informative book I was struck by how much time Orwell

spent on the Walberswick side of what is now the Bailey bridge. In Orwell's day the bridge was the railway crossing and closed to pedestrians (seem familiar?) but that did not stop Orwell and others risking life and limb crossing it. Trains did not travel at speed on the Southwold to Halesworth railway but the risk of falling into the Blyth was significant, a risk far greater I imagine than that that causing its temporary closure in 2018.

If Dr. Binns' book was just a travel guide identifying houses and streets then I would have been interested but ultimately bored. However, it is so much more and you get a real sense of Orwell's emotional state and an insight into his character. Orwell has always been a hero of mine but I finished the book with a feeling of an unpleasant side to his character. Against this he may just have been a mixed-up young man rebelling against his parents values.

The opening chapter "the road to Southwold pier" imagines Orwell's arrival in Southwold on the train from Halesworth. An eighteen year old Eton schoolboy he was like so many boys today, back home with the parents. Except that in 1921 most boys would already have been working for over four years at his age. He was a privileged young man. His family were certainly well up the class structure in small-town Southwold and determined to maintain the *status quo*. The chapter also describes 1920's Southwold and touches on the gentrification that has taken place ever since.

Orwell's initial stay in Southwold was short as in 1922 he left for a position in Burma. Returning to Southwold in 1927 he was a changed man and a challenge to his parents. He had given up his comfortable job with the idea of earning his living by writing. With the benefit of hind-sight we know how it eventually turned out but any parent can imagine how his mother and father felt about this. Eric was not only a financial problem but also proceeded to put his family's social standing in jeopardy.

I can recommend this book on a number of levels including historical, social and literary. For Walberswick folks you can find out about his sexual angst and his love in the long grass over the river. He comes across in an unsympathetic way but probably no different to many young men in his position. There is also the famous ghost story in Walberswick churchyard. The latter is linked to the tutoring of a young man, Bryan Morgan, who lived in Millfield Road. Orwell seems to have wandered far and wide with references to fishing trips to the pool by the old mill and walks through the heronry. Of interest to people who recall Rogers' Garage on the green there is the incident of Orwell's pursuit of George Rogers' sister, Dorothy, and how he was "seen off" by her boyfriend. Orwell appears to have been partial to a beer and I imagine he must have frequented both the Anchor and Bell as well as the documented visits to the Harbour Inn.

By 1934 Orwell was mostly finished with Southwold as a place of abode other than brief trips back to the family home. However he was certainly not finished with Southwold. It seems he took his revenge on the town and people of Southwold by including unpleasant disguised references to them in his writings. People in this part of the world have long memories but perhaps it is time to embrace Orwell's place in local history.

Orwell in Southwold is published by Zoilus Press and is available in local bookshops. Ronald Binns will talk to WLHG on Orwell in March.

John English

For King and Country – World War I in Walberswick – John English

The full 39 pages of this article are now available to read on the internet. You can access this through the Walberswick web site or, if you are reading this electronically, just navigate to <http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/assets/WLHG/King-and-Country-09122018.pdf>. Some observant readers have noticed that according to the Walberswick war memorial (see below) WWI did not end until 1919. This is not that uncommon and reflects the fact that though the fighting ended on the 11th November 1918 the peace treaty signed at the Paris Peace Conference officially ended the state of war between Germany and the Allied Powers on 28th June 1919.

When researching the article I was struck by how often men at census time were recorded as living with their grandparents rather than their parents. So many grandparents now love to have their grandchildren for “sleepovers” and I guess that has always been so. However, in centuries past this may have been born of necessity. Comparing census records with birth, marriage and death records and a church memorial shows the reason for this for WWI veteran, Charles Kerridge.

Charles Henry Kerridge was born in Walberswick in 1883, the grandson of Ben Kerridge, born 1833 and the son of Thomas and Martha. Ben was also the grandfather of Ivy Cross, wife of Harold Cross.



In 1901 Charles was living with Ben and Sarah Kerridge (his grandparents). He was a miller’s carter. The reason he was living with his grandparents may be explained by a tragic event during the year of his birth which would mean he never knew his father, Thomas.

There is a stone memorial in a window space in the church in memory of seven Walberswick men who were drowned in September 1883 after their boat, “The Clipper”, was lost at sea. The drowned include Thomas Kerridge, son of Ben and father of Charles. Drowning was an occupational hazard in the fishing industry. The stone can be seen to the right. Charles Kerridge married Florence Pearce, born in Halesworth, in 1910.



The 1911 census shows Charles Kerridge, and Florence living in Gladstone Cottage, The Street, Walberswick with his grandmother, Sarah (no mention of Ben). Happily Charles survived the war and died around the age of 80 in Blythburgh in 1963.