



WALBERSWICK LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO: 54

OCTOBER 2018

Newsletter Editor's report

This is my first newsletter as the new editor following the AGM earlier in the year. At that meeting Pat Lancaster passed one of the three "hats" she was wearing to me i.e. newsletter editor. Another of her hats (honorary secretary) she passed to newly-elected committee member Rebecca Whiting. Thankfully, she did however retain her original post of archivist. We all owe Pat a big vote of thanks for holding things together during a period of change.

I hope that you enjoy reading this latest newsletter. I have a great resource in the archive to generate pieces for future additions. However, I am keen that the newsletter contains new information. We are, after all, a history group dedicated to researching the history of the village. Anything that you (the reader) come across about Walberswick history, especially if there is a photograph involved, would be very welcome. You can drop the committee a line via the new enquiry form on the Walberswick web site (<http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/walberswick-local-history-group/contact-us/>) and one of us will get back to you to discuss it.

Currently, most members receive their newsletter as a printed copy. If you would be happy to receive your copy by e-mail then please let Edward and me know – you can use the renewal form or send a note via the web site. This would reduce printing costs and distribution costs for those members living outside Walberswick.

Committee

We had a great response to the appeal for new committee members and WLHG will continue with new and some younger blood. At the AGM Philip and Pat Kett stood down as Chair and Treasurer and Maureen Thompson stood as membership secretary. These three were all stalwarts of WLHG and they were given a huge "thank you" for their years of work and dedication to WLHG. Luckily they will still be around to answer questions. The current committee and officers are as follows:

- Harry Edwards – Chairman
- Pat Lancaster - Archivist
- Rebecca Whiting - Secretary
- Edward Wright - Membership Secretary
- Peter Byrne - Treasurer
- John English - Newsletter Editor
- Jayne Tibbles
- Richard Steward
- Nat le Roux

Membership and Data Protection

Edward Wright, new membership secretary, has done a fantastic job in getting WLHG to comply with the new data protection law that came into effect in May. If you have any queries concerning this or your membership please get in touch.

Annual Subscriptions are due in December. Please see the attached renewal form which should be returned to Edward with your subscription, which is £7.50, by the end of December. Subscriptions can now be renewed electronically as you will see on the form. As always, for convenience you can renew at the talk on the 8th December (see below).

Please try to renew on time so that Edward does not need to check that you wish to remain a member. Membership seems to have increased since a year ago.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

*Pip Wright WILL GIVE A TALK ON “Witches of Suffolk”
Saturday 20th October 2018*

*Harry Edwards WILL GIVE A TALK ON “Arabella gets a kick out of the seaside”
Saturday 8th December 2018*

Maurice Godbold by Julia Reisz

With the death of Maurice in January, the History Group has lost one of its most devoted and accomplished members. When I first began to edit the Newsletter, I read all the past issues, and was struck by his fascinating paper on Walberswick Wills. These were listed in the Prebendary Court of Canterbury, and Maurice extracted them from records in the Public Record Office. They give a fascinating picture of the lives of the wealthier inhabitants of Walberswick from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. They contain information about houses, furniture, clothing, land and ships – as well as bequests to the Church and for the relief of the poorer inhabitants. The wills also reveal starkly how the prosperity of the village declined during that period. It is all together an exemplary piece of scholarly research.

As I had been impressed by this, I was naturally delighted when Maurice proposed that he and I interview Freddie Eade when he retired, as he was the last Walberswick fisherman to work from the harbour. “Interview” is perhaps the wrong word: when Freddie and Maurice met at my house we simply turned on the tape recorder and let Freddie start talking...These recollections of Freddie’s were edited by Maurice and turned by him into a most entertaining and informative article which affectionately revealed Freddie’s personality.

Maurice’s final effort for the History Group was partly inspired by Freddie’s retirement, which terminated Walberswick’s connection with fishing. He researched and wrote two long articles tracing the history of fishing in the village from the Middle Ages until the end of the nineteenth century. Many interesting facts emerged, telling of rivalries and battles with Dunwich and also the Dutch. There are vivid accounts of some of the devastating losses sustained by fishing and trading boats. He also demonstrated that agriculture played at least as important a part as fishing in the support of the village.

His research was always impeccable and his writing elegant and direct: it was a pleasure to work with him. The work he did for the archives will, I am sure, be of value and interest to our members as well as researchers in future years.

Newly-discovered photograph of “The White Bridge”

Old pictures discovered at the bottom of cupboards etc. often leave us perplexed and wishing we had asked our grandparents more about local history while they were alive. Luckily for me (John English) we still have Philip Kett available to fill in the details concerning old Walberswick. The following is what Philip had to say about the picture below (it’s the bridge leading to what is now the camp site on the back of the beach).

The picture is of the White bridge. This appears to be the only picture of it. You can see why it was known as the White Bridge, some fancy work with a paint brush. The gate on the Beach side was to stop the Cattle returning home.



Across the bridge is where the Old Town Marshes were situated. Most of them have now been lost through erosion by the sea. Access to this marsh grazing was over Walberswick Common Lands Charity (The Trust) land. They own the track to the sluice bridge and around the edge of Cliff field, the track towards the Caravan site and the track then onto the Beach. When the New Dunwich River was dug about 1750 the dyke cut through the right of way. As it was not very wide a single plank was used as a bridge with one handrail, known as a “Ligger bridge”. The cattle could still access the grazing marshes owned by the Trust by crossing the Sluice Bridge but could not get across the ligger bridge. At a later date the dyke was widened to take a bigger flow of water and the present Sluice was built, to keep the drainage working. Beyond the sluice is a spur in the dyke and leading out under the track a hollowed out log was used as a temporary sluice until the work was finished and then it was filled in.

Other names that “The New Dunwich River” has been known by locally are “The Creek” and “The Went”.

With the extra flow of water a better bridge was needed. As the population grew, the ladies were not in great support of the ligger bridge, so a new bridge was built, that became the white bridge. It was fitted onto concrete piers to stop the banks eroding away, the piers can still be seen. Most probably in the early 1930s, 1938 there had been a flood tide that had broken through the beach and moved the bridge off its footings. It also looks like it was raised in the centre much like the original Kissing Bridge, being supported on two piles. It may never have been replaced before WW2 as at that time all the bridges across the New Dunwich River were taken away and most were not replaced until several years after WW2.

With the advent of WW2, defences were quickly thrown up, steel scaffolding was placed along all the

East Coast Beaches and Dragons Teeth were set in concrete buried in the seabed around the low water mark, used to rip the bottom out of any boat that ventured ashore. This was all serviced by a 2ft gauge light railway which crossed the New Dunwich River at the same place that the White Bridge used to stand and ran all the way to Dunwich carrying everything needed on four-wheeled flatbed trucks, pushed by manpower. At the end of hostilities the railway had to be re-laid and everything taken away, but for a while the tracks and a couple of the four-wheeled flatbed trucks remained, of which us youngsters made good use. - Philip Kett



Ed – thanks Philip for providing so much information based on one small picture.

To the left is a post-war picture of Owen English (my uncle) sitting on some of the scaffolding that adorned the beach for some years after the end of WW2. I am sure that we are all pleased it is no longer there. However, we all happily accept the worn and weathered concrete blocks that lie behind the beach. Built *in-situ* these have remained mostly where they were constructed, never having obstructed a German tank. Another Owen poses in front of one such block. When will he think to ask his grandfather “what was it all about”?



WLHG day out to Bentwaters

The invasion by sea and air never came but the threat changed our landscape and as with the concrete blocks much remains. Earlier in the year (17th June) Nigel Walpole organised a visit to Bentwaters museum. Used by the RAF in WW2 and the USAF during the “cold war” a number of Walberswick people worked there when it was a functioning base. Below is a record of that visit and a reminder of a very interesting outing.



The Alms Houses in Reydon known as “The Rest”

In the last issue we included an article by Bill Ungless entitled “**REYDON ALMS HOUSES BY FRANK JENNINGS**”. **Marian Proctor from Wenhaston** has since sent us this additional and interesting information to supplement Bill’s article:

This attractive complex of four cottages was generously commissioned by Andrew Matthews. He was a wealthy London business man who also had property in Southwold.

“The Rest” was designed and built in 1908 by the Architect, Frank Jennings, and officially opened in April 1910 for the sole use of residents over the age of 65 years who were in financial need.

The cottages were originally intended for people from Southwold but they were built in Reydon because this was the only suitable plot of land which could be found.

The four detached cottages are Grade 2 listed buildings and are well proportioned with leaded windows and many charming features which the architect used in the houses he also built in Walberswick around the same time. Two of the cottages are set well back from the road on a small terrace, the other two face one another.

The cottages are enclosed by a decorative brick wall with railings along the roadside and ornamental wrought iron gates with two unusual round gatehouses with turrets, often used as a store for garden implements, one for each pair of cottages. The doors were specially made to follow the curved design with elaborate black hinges. On one of the gate houses it used to be inscribed with the wording “For the Aged Poor” but over the years the word “Poor” has been erased as it was deemed inappropriate.

The gardens are laid out with lawns, paths and flower beds with a statue in the centre called “Rest” which was erected in 1914 and designed by Hibbert Binney. It shows a very old lady wearing a bonnet who has fallen asleep over her knitting. The inscription beneath the statue reads:

*Such peace as many a toiler craves
When life's more arduous work is past,
Here some may gladly find at last
Between the meadows and the waves*

The picturesque gardens have three sets of steps leading up to the two cottages set back on the terrace. On each set of steps are two ornate pelican sculptures.

Originally Andrew Matthews fitted out each cottage with oak furniture but this has gradually been replaced with furniture brought from the occupant's old homes. In the early days there were no ceilings to the rooms, no electricity or hot water.

Over the years the cottages have been modernised and my Mother was fortunate enough to be offered one of these dwellings and moved in on 19th August 1994. By this time all the walls, which had once been bare brick had been emulsioned except for the attractive feature fireplace in the sitting room which still retained the exposed brick with a substantial dark oak beam mantle shelf above. On each side of the fireplace were two cupboards with heavy wooden doors and long black decorative hinges. There were also little alcoves set into the brickwork each side of the fireplace where an ornament could be displayed. The wrought iron grate was nicely designed. There was an oak seat built into each side of the fireplace which could be used for storage space underneath possibly for logs or coal.

There were two bedrooms, a larger one which faced onto the front garden and another which faced south onto the back garden. This smaller bedroom had been fitted with a basin with hot and cold taps. I felt there must have been a fire place in at least one of the bedrooms at some time in the past but no apparent sign of one.

The kitchen had been modernised and updated from the early days when it came complete with a fitted rotary pump for the water supply. There was a walk in pantry with floor to ceiling shelving and another pantry which was smaller. There had once been a fireplace in the kitchen that had been sealed off and made into a cupboard. There was a very solid stable door which led out onto a quite sizeable back garden. The doors all had metal latches painted black.

I understand that when the cottages were built there were earth closets and a Galo bucket and shovel which was pretty primitive. Over the years the cottage was updated and a bathroom and toilet were installed but the bath was exceptionally small. This was later removed and replaced with a new shower with wet room floor and curtain.

Other improvements have been made including some secondary double glazing, installation of electric storage heaters, smoke detectors and a “panic button” emergency call system.

Andrew Matthews had laid out rules in an old leather-bound book and it was discovered that each resident would receive a gift of five shillings on his wife Ellen's birthday, on 21st March each year if they had a picture of her hanging on their wall. In 2006 the gift had increased to £20 but the picture was no longer a requirement.

On the front of each of the Homes is a white inscribed tablet bearing a motto chosen by Ellen Matthews. The first one says simply “*Be Kind Quickly*”, the second, “*As ye would that men do to you, do ye also unto them*”, the third “*Peace be to those that dwell within*”, and the fourth “*If there is any kindness or any good thing I can do to my fellow beings, let me do it now. I shall pass this way but once*”.

So, next time you pass by “The Rest” in Covert Road, maybe stop and take a closer look at a piece of our local history which is still enhancing the village after over a hundred years.

The Anchor and Ginger Winyard

In the previous newsletter there was an article concerning Charles Rennie Mackintosh (CRM). Since that article appeared there has been more bad luck for Mackintosh followers with a further fire in the Glasgow School of Art. Walberswick is now very much on the Mackintosh trail and so I include this tenuous link. In the previous article I mentioned the odd recollection by Ginger Winyard of Mackintosh sharing a room with him at The Anchor. As mentioned, Ginger's father, Jack Winyard, did not take over The Anchor until 1924 and Mackintosh died in 1928. Therefore, if this meeting happened (and some have expressed doubt) it would have been in 1925 or 1926. It could not have been during WW1 as Ginger was not born until 1916.

On the right is a photograph of Jack Winyard – he is the man wearing the unusual trousers. In the background are Anchor Cottages and a wall that has stood unchanged up to earlier this year. The date of the photograph is unknown but it could be late twenties. If only they could have got CRM to pose with them!



For King and Country – World War I in Walberswick

In 2014 WLHG posted an article on the Walberswick website concerning Walberswick people and WWI – you can still read it at <http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/assets/WLHG/For-King-and-CountryV051014.pdf>. It was always the intention to update and expand this in 2018 to commemorate the coming of peace. This is still the intention. Check the web site in November. The following is a brief extract from the introduction.

One artefact that still remains in the village is an embossed brass box enclosing a Christmas card and photograph of Princess Mary (seventeen year-old daughter of the King and Queen). The other original contents (tobacco or sweets) have, understandably, not survived. These boxes were the result of a “Sailors and Soldiers Christmas Fund” instigated by the Princess and were intended to be given to all serving overseas on Christmas day 1914. The box in the photograph was found in a cabinet where it was displayed with other memorabilia probably since the end of the war. Well over two million of these boxes were distributed but this one is remarkable in that it remains in the family of the recipient and is still in Walberswick.

The enthusiastic response to the appeal for money to provide these boxes is, perhaps, an indication of public optimism about the war in 1914. The full horror of the dead and maimed family and friends had yet to be seen. By the end of the war public subscriptions were being elicited for a much more sombre purpose – the erection of memorials to the war dead.



Coming soon – The History of West Wood Garden

The quality of our local speakers has been amazing. In recent years we have seen the Village Hall packed to capacity. I am sure that this is set to continue and I will try hard not to miss **“Arabella gets a kick out of the seaside”** in December. In May 2018 we were given a great talk by Nat le Roux on the history of Westwood Gardens and those that signed up were privileged to get a conducted tour of the gardens the following week. Nat kindly agreed to commit his talk to print. There is no room in this issue but watch out early next year for the first of two articles. There are still people in Walberswick who remember Mea Allen and the articles will be of special interest to them.



WALBERSWICK LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

New Membership/Renewal Application

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

POST CODE: _____

TELEPHONE NO: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

WOULD YOU LIKE NEWSLETTERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS BY EMAIL? YES / NO

Data Protection

I consent to the Walberswick Local History Group holding my personal data while I remain a member of the group. I understand that my data will not be shared with third parties and will only be used for the purposes of the group such as contacting me about events and membership renewal.

Subscription

The subscription is £7.50 per member per year and runs from 1st January to 31st December.

If you join for the first time on or after 1st July your payment of £7.50 per person covers you until 31st December the following year- up to 18 months membership for £7.50.

Please attach a cheque for £7.50 payable to Walberswick Local History Group

OR pay electronically to our bank account:

Sort Code: 09 01 54

Account number: 06166080

Please use your name as the payment reference.

Please delete as appropriate: Cheque attached/ paying electronically

Signed:

Date:

Please return this form to:

Edward Wright (membership secretary)

Mill Croft Millfield Road Walberswick IP18 6UD

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