



# WALBERSWICK

## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 41

FEBRUARY 2012

We now have a new Archivist: Pat Lancaster has taken over the task of managing the Archives, and putting all the items into a database so that any document, picture or artefact can be instantly retrieved. I would like to remind members that any item can be borrowed if you sign the record book that Pat keeps.

I have been taking advantage of this privilege by borrowing one of the gems of the collection: the late Hanns Lange's study of *Walberswick Families 1600-1900*. It is truly wonderful that a refugee to this country should have settled in our little patch of England and undertaken this tremendous piece of research. All members of families living in the village during the time span are listed, as well as wills, graves in the churchyard, information from trade directories—and much much more. There cannot be many villages that have such a complete record. It will be of immense value to future historians.

Prominent in the record are members of the large English family; before World War II there were still many of that name living in Walberswick. Now, alas, there are only two: Jayne Tibbles and John English. I am delighted that the latter has contributed to this issue a piece concerning the provenance of two prints that Jayne discovered in her attic. It is a reminder of the days when artists visiting the village liked to paint the local inhabitants.

**Julia Reisz, Editor**

**Subscriptions are now due: please contact Maureen Thompson as soon as possible at 01502 723755 and pay her what you owe. Annual subscription is £5.**

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY** (All meetings at 7.30pm in the Village Hall)

**Saturday 14 April**  
**Sam Newton will talk on**  
***"Beowulf and the Beginning of English Literature"***  
**(Coffee & Biscuits will be served)**

**Tuesday 24 April**  
**Annual General Meeting**  
**(Come for a glass of wine)**

## HENRY STACY MARKS – EVIDENCE OF HIS VISIT TO WALBERSWICK

While going through her loft in Lima Cottage, Jayne Tibbles (born Jayne English) unearthed two prints that appear to provide further evidence of the visit of the artist Henry Stacy Marks to Walberswick during the summer of 1876. No original art work resulting from Marks' visit or visits to Walberswick are known to have survived, but the prints provide further evidence that he did produce work in Walberswick. In addition the prints provoke questions concerning the identities of the subjects depicted. Are they members of the English family and, if so, which ones? There are no certain answers but there are a number of reasons to link these portraits with ancestors of current Walberswick house owners, Jane Tibbles and John English.

### The Artist

Henry Stacy Marks (1829-1898) was principally an artist, but due to financial necessity he also carried out decorative work on buildings including the Albert Hall. He could have been described as a painter and decorator! He was elected ARA in 1871 and RA in 1878. Marks was based in London and a member of the "*St. John's Wood clique*" and described as a notorious practical joker. Richard Scott in his book *Artists at Walberswick* records that Marks visited Walberswick in the company of other artists including Charles Keene and Edwin Edwards. Marks records in his journal that he visited Walberswick in 1876, though this may not have been his only visit. Richard Scott further notes that, according to a local diarist, while in Walberswick Marks painted three generations of the English family. Specifically the diarist mentions the family of William English of Old Farm. The latter may be misleading as discussed later.

### The Portraits

The prints are of portraits of a young boy and an old man. They are mounted on card embossed just below the print with the name of the print maker (Arthur Lucas) and his address (49 Wigmore St.W). A search of the internet shows that Arthur Lucas (born in 1842) was a photographer and indeed a print publisher. He is recorded as having a studio at 37 Wigmore Street, St Marylebone July 1867 – 1868 and at 49 Wigmore Street, St Marylebone 1869 – 1870, and sharing his studio with Frederic Beadell here 1870 - 1877. This is consistent with the date of 1876 recorded in Marks' journal. The prints are probably albumen (photographic) prints. (See opposite page and page 5).

What makes the prints intriguing is that both mounts are written on by H.S Marks. As may be seen, the print of the young boy states "*To Mrs Robert English from H. S Marks*" and that of the man "*To Robert English Junior from H.S. Marks*". The dedications are on the cards, and the prints themselves are not signed, but the fact that Marks signed the cards and took the trouble to give them to Mr and Mrs English, strongly suggests that he was the artist. Why would he go out of his way to give them another artist's work? Both prints were framed when found with the dedications showing, and from the discoloration of the card they surely must have been displayed at some time in the past before being consigned to the loft.

### The English Family

Who are the figures in the prints? There were quite a number of men with the name English living in Walberswick in 1876 and a few with the name Robert English. There are a number of clues as to which Robert may be in the portrait, if indeed these are portraits of English family members. The biggest clue is the reference to "Robert English Junior". In



*"To Robert English Junior from H.S.Marks"*

1876 there were a father and son both called Robert English, and the younger is referred to as “junior” in other sources.

Robert English senior was born in Walberswick in 1800 and died in 1883 (therefore about 76 years old at the time the picture was made). The man in the portrait could easily be 76 years old. Robert English was an occasional ferryman as well as a fisherman. There is a photograph of this Robert English taken in the late 1870s according to Dani Church in *The story of the Southwold-Walberswick Ferry*. The man in the print and the man in the photograph (Robert is to the right of George Todd in the photograph) do appear similar in appearance. Dani also mentions that George Todd and Robert English are “wearing their trademark hats”. The hat in the portrait and that in the photograph certainly look alike and are unusual fishing headgear. Did simple fishermen normally have such hats? Could this hat have been a souvenir of Robert English’s time sitting for H S Marks?

### **The Sons of Robert English**

Robert English senior had a number of sons including a William. However, William and his brother James were drowned at sea in 1845 so this William could not be the one mentioned in the diary. All these sons would have been much too old to be the young boy in the other print. If three generations were painted then the portrait of the middle generation family member may not have been printed or provided to the family or has been lost. Whatever the case, it is a shame that only two portraits were found.

*Robert English junior* was born in 1834 and had six sons and two daughters. Two sons were drowned at sea in 1883. Other sons who lived in Walberswick with known offspring were George (born 1858), William (born 1862) and Thomas (born 1871). Could any of these be the young boy?

*George English*, later referred to as “Captain George” was the father of Robert (Bob) English, grandfather of Owen English and great grandfather of John Robert English, all of Beach View Walberswick. George would have been about 18 years old in 1876 and therefore clearly too old to be the subject of the portrait.

*William English* was the father of Daisy English and grandfather of Jimmy Meekins\*, all of what was then Rose Cottage. William would have been about 14 years old in 1876 and therefore again too old to be the subject of the portrait. However, was this the William referred to by the diarist, and if so what was the connection with Old Farm? Perhaps William was working at Old Farm at the time?

*Thomas English* was the father of William (Blucher) English and the grandfather of Jayne English (now Tibbles). Tom would have been about 5 years old in 1876 and therefore could possibly be the subject of the portrait. It is difficult to judge the size and age of the child in the portrait but it is possible that this is a boy of about 5 years old. The hat the figure is wearing looks too large to be his and bears a similarity to George Todd’s trademark hat in the photograph! Another small clue to this being Thomas English is that the prints were passed down from Robert and Mrs Robert English to descendants of Thomas, i.e. Blucher and Jayne English.

\* *A biography of Jimmy Meekins appeared in the February 2010 edition of the Newsletter*



*"To Mrs Robert English from H.S.Marks"*

## **Conclusion**

The census records for the years surrounding the date of the portrait show members of the family living at Quay Street, Park Green and Bell Green. The earlier reference to Old Farm has to be taken seriously but may be misleading. Old Farm was surely too large a property to be the residence of fishermen?

In conclusion, we will probably never really know who actually produced these works of art and who the subjects are. However, it seems likely that the prints are from lost works of H S Marks and that the man may be Robert English. It is also a possibility that the boy could be Thomas English. They are certainly attractive relics of 19<sup>th</sup> century Walberswick, when artists visited the village and used the villagers as subjects.

## **John English**

**(Great grandson of “Captain George” English)**

### **ADDITIONS TO THE ARCHIVES**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Donated By</b>
“Memories of Walberswick” By Dorothy Walton (1978)	Brita Haycraft
Verses by Grahame Godsmark In the Village News	Grahame Godsmark
Poem: East Point Bridge	Grahame Godsmark
Email from National Archives, Kew	Pat Lancaster
Archive Index	Pat Lancaster
The Wind in the Willows 2012 Programme	Pat Lancaster
“Donation of tit boxes by Waveney Bird Club”	EADT/Pat Lancaster
Verses by John Hugman in EADT Feb 2012	EADT/Pat Lancaster
“Life and Death of Essex Witch Ursula Kemp”	EADT/Pat Lancaster
Collection of artefacts, labels etc Found under floorboards at Rooftree	Keith Webb