



WALBERSWICK LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 43

FEBRUARY 2013

A note from the Chairman

This newsletter is, I hope, the first of many under our new editor as Julia Reisz has retired. The History Group has thanked Julia for her invaluable services in producing some interesting reading over the past 10 years.

Now I would like to introduce our new editor, Helen Baxter, who has resided in the village for some 22 years. I trust she will edit many more interesting newsletters for us in years to come.

Philip Kett

A note from the Editor

Thank you, Philip. And my grateful thanks go, too, to Julia for her help and useful suggestions in an excellent handover. In this issue, you will find the first part of a serialisation of a 'diary of shipwrecks' and, in a future issue, we would like to cover 'things that go bump in the night'. There are many ghosts said to 'live' in the village - have you come across any? Please contact me with your 'encounters of the third kind'. I'd love to hear about them.

Helen Baxter (01502 725 070)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 13 April

RSPB Minsmere: Past, present and future

Sue Rendell-Read

Tuesday 23 April

History Group AGM

Saturday 19 October

Suffolk Coast

Mark Mitchels

All meetings commence at 19.30 in the village hall.

Serialisation of 'Shipwrecks at or near Walberswick from 1792-1845', taken from Bottomley, A. (2007) *The Southwold Diary of James Maggs*, vol. I, 1818-1848, Boydell Press, Woodbridge (for the Suffolk Records Society).

The following introduction comes from Hanns Lange:

'These extracts [...] enumerating shipwrecks, other marine disasters and accidents at sea around the treacherous coast of Walberswick and nearby give a vivid picture of the important role the marine transport and sea-fishing industry played in the arduous [sic] and often dangerous lives of the coastal community of East Suffolk - the most eastern part of the British Isles.

'It is also interesting to note that during the period of the first 75 years of the last century, the ships involved in various mishaps were - with only three exceptions - all sailing ships.

'James Maggs was born on the 9th. Febr. 1797 as the 11th child of Thomas Maggs and his wife Ann, neé Snell in Walberswick at the 'Blue Anchor' inn, where Thomas Maggs was the landlord.

'James Maggs died in Southwold on the 3rd. Febr. 1890 at the age of 93 and during his long and active life spent in this town, he was elected coroner, auctioneer, first secretary of the Medical Dispensary, assistant overseer of the poor, appointed bailiff of the Court Leet, school governor, surveyor of the Highways and also held other honorary and important posts in the town of Southwold.

'These extracts from his diary are copied from the published version in their original form i.e. in James Maggs' own spelling, abbreviations and punctuations.'

[Ed's note: I have, for the most part, retained Lange's 'original form', except for italicising names of boats, using capital letters sparingly and adding commas etc. as deemed necessary. We will be meeting James Maggs again, in a different context.]

PART 1: 1782-1822

1782: A Danish vessel called *Johannas*, Borre Mow Master, wrecked on the Goodwin Sands on her voyage from Ostend to the coast of Africa with WINE, a large portion of which was salvaged and entered into this Court as 'waif' and 'derelict' and sold on 28 March this year producing £745 5s 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.

1802, Jan 20th: A Collier Brig (known or remembered by the name of the *Fire Ship*) caught fire and came on shore opposite the Sand Pit. Crew sav'd. Same day a Shallop belonging to Clay, lost upon Sand-hail. Crew saved by Pilot Boat *Dove*.

1802, Decr 27th: The ship *Frederick* of London lost off here. Crew perished.

1806, June 9: Reported by John Hurr, Southwold. The *Burletta* Sloop of War on sending her 4 oar'd gally to this Harbour comprising a Russian ambassador - the Captain, Mate and 5 seamen, upset upon the bar, whereby 4 of the seamen & the ambassador were lost. The Master, Mate and the other seaman, named Simpson, were saved by a boat of Edward Garrards and another in which my informant John Petty Hurr and Robert Sterry went to their assistance. Two of the men were grappled up and interred here. About 10 days after the Russian ambassador was picked up at Easton by one Skinner, a midshipman at the Easton signal house and old Will Skelton of this place. The ambassador was interred in the Churchyard near the steeple. Skinner absconded and Will Skelton imprisoned at Ipswich for being guilty of robbing the body of the ambassador of a gold watch and about 50 guineas. The watch was deliver'd up by Skinner to Lieutenant Forman.

1807, Feb 18th: *Tartar* and crew lost off Yarmouth - two of the crew Charles Grant, 38, and Stepn John Blundell, 21, picked up and interred at Dunwich. Same gale the ship *Traveller* and crew lost off this town.

1808, Decr 19: The *Neptune* of Whitby, with passengers from London to thence, came on shore near Bound Post, and became a total wreck. Crew saved.

1808, Decr 23rd: The *Twilight* of Newcastle, Edwd Twaddell - with a general cargo, came on shore here. Crew saved.

1808, Decr 28th: Towed a Swade Ship a shoar [sic] at Southwold with boats, called the *Marriar Charlotte* - Capt Blomer Master, no one on board. *W. Woodward*.

1815, Dec 7th: The *Briton* of Scarbro with a general cargo went on shore East Cliff - crew saved - and vessel repair'd.

1817, July 16th: The *Alert* Joseph Pyett, wreck'd at Blakeny - Robt Crickmore and Francis Stannard, seamen, drowned.

1820, March 2d: A Sloop came on shore near the bound Post laden with Grindstones etc.

1821, Dec 22nd: The *Polly* of Plymouth, with potatoes, came into this Harbour off Orford Beach, damaged & repair'd.

1822, Decr 7th: Ship *Westmoreland* and crew except 2 lost off Lowestoft - laden with general cargo.

The Walberswick Local History Group has come of age! Yes, it is exactly 21 years ago that what had been an ad hoc group of people changed, 'official' positions were created (Don Thompson, Chairman, Pat Wythe, Secretary, Mary Clayton, Treasurer) and the delving into the fascinating past of this village and surrounds began in earnest. I have been trawling through the archives and have come up with some interesting articles that bear repetition. The first selection is about the floods (appropriate, as we have just been through a similar situation, albeit not quite so serious), then about some local characters ... there is loads more, so let's get on with it.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Miss Jessie Browton recorded in her diary: 'The flood in 1953 when the dykes overflowed was very severe at this end of the village and for hours the roadway became a roaring stream. A family consisting of a mother and three small children had to be evacuated from their cottage with the aid of a boat from their bedroom window and it was a sad sight for days afterwards when furniture and goods were carried out on to the Green to dry and get rid of mud and water. It was one or two years before the land recovered. The marshes were ruined for cattle feeding. It is to be hoped the high banks and other protection work that is only just finished will prevent another such disaster.'

While George Rogers' daughter, Nan Osborne of Blythburgh, related a story about her father that Derrick Allen, then Editor of the newsletter, passed on to us: 'George owned a garage on the Green, now the Wine Shop [whatever happened to that?!]. When the floods subsided and everything was still damp, he borrowed Leighton Block's saw to make a mark of the flood level on the left hand post facing the sea part of the Jubilee seat near the hall. Go and have a look. Do you think we should have a plaque to record this unusual disaster?' [Is that mark still there?]

Arthur Sharman (ex-Special Constable) lived not too far away from the scene of his salvage operations, which he performed from a dinghy complete with oars that had been left providentially in the vicinity. He recounted that the most difficult rescue was that of Mrs Cowley at the Hidden Hut. She was a lady of large proportions and, when the boat arrived, the water was lapping the mattress of her bed. By now, he had been joined by Harry Meekins (Jimmy's brother). After a lot of persuasion, they enticed her to the bedroom window and lifted her into the boat, which was no mean task. ... Ruth Godwin and her two very young children were rescued from Harbour View, also Mrs Harvey and her family living in the second bungalow on the right, situated in the road that turns off the lane leading to the sluice bridge. Mrs Harvey was the daughter of Mr Adams, who will never be forgotten as long as Adams Lane exists. Mr and Mrs Scott at Samphire Cottage, where the water had reached the top of the porch, refused the

offered salvation - nevertheless they survived. ... The water eventually reached the Anchor before the tide turned. A lot of people were involved through their kindly acts. Crisis within a community always brings out the best in us.

[Don't forget that the Sea Defence Focus Group is giving a short presentation and Q&A session on the government's 'Shoreline Management Plan' and the 'Blyth Estuary Strategy' in the village hall on Saturday 6 April at 10.30. Flooding and coastal erosion are now a permanent occurrence in our lives, so please attend if you possibly can.]

The **Miss Jessie Browton**, whose flood diary is recorded earlier, 'taught art at Skinner's Girls' School in Ware. As a young teacher, she used to stay with Mrs Gilbert at Blyth House for summer holidays. She spent many happy holidays painting and you will have seen some of the results which were on display at our meeting in April 1992. When she retired in the 1950s, she bought Blythwyk Cottage in the Street (formerly 1 Gladstone Cottages) and started keeping her diary. Eventually she left five ring binders containing accounts of anything interesting that happened in the village together with other items of interest relating to the village. Most of it is in her own handwriting but there are press cuttings, photographs and post cards as well. When she died her friend, Mrs Croucher, who realised the value of these documents, gave them into the safe keeping of the Southwold Museum Library together with the folio of paintings where they remain today. ... Blyth House, where Miss Browton stayed for those holidays before the war, formerly stood on the flats, backing, broadly speaking, onto Ferry Cottage, then called Cook's Corner. Blyth House faced the harbour and was last occupied by the Gilbert family. It was subject to frequent flooding.'

Further to the short introduction to **James Maggs** given by Hanns Lange earlier, the following is an account of his own life in his diary: 'James, son of Thos. and Ann Maggs. Born Feb 9th 1797 at ye "Blue Anchor" Public House, Walberswick. 1804 put to school to a Mr. Tuthill, Wenhaston. 1811 was articled to Mr. Tuthill as Usher for 3 years. 1814 went as Clerk or Transcriber to Mr. Jermyn of Southwold who was compiling an "English Gradus" and a "Dictionary of Epithets". 1816 took a Teachers [sic] Situation in the Grammar School, Dedham. Afterwards to St. Margaret's Hospital, Green Coat School, Westminster. 1817 opened a school in Walberswick. 1818 opened school in Southwold to 1841. Conducted Sunday School in Southwold from 1822-1840. 1818 married Elizabeth, only daughter of Thos. and Ann Roberts of Wangford by whom he had 5 sons and 7 daughters. 1822 opened Grocers [sic] Shop in Southwold. 1833 declined the shop. 1823 elected Coroner for the Borough. ... He was also Auctioneer and Rate Collector and an antiquary collecting local curiosities and records. ... Was Assistant Overseer for 43 years. ... Died March 3 1890 aged 93. His father died early in life but his mother lived to be 96.' (From a letter to Rev. R.W.M. Lewis from Mrs Critten, The Manor House, Southwold.)

AN AMUSING INTERLUDE

The following comes at the end of a 'Glossary of old-fashioned words', in Clarke, Reverend J.B. (1903) *Wenhaston and Bulcamp Suffolk: Curious Parish Records [full title: Wenhaston and Bulcamp Suffolk: Curious Parish Records Including Lists of Vicars from 1217 & Churchwardens from 1547 with a Description of the Recently Discovered Ancient Painting Known as the 'Wenhaston Doom' Old Wills and Law-Suits of the Parish]*, William P. Gale, Halesworth. [What follows is as published, but I have alphabetised the list.]

A few names of places as pronounced by old people

Spelling	Pronunciation
Benhall	Bennil
Blythborough	Blybra
Chediston	Chaston (in 1469, recorded pronunciation Chestayn)
Covehithe	Cothie
Framlingham	Framminan
Halesworth	Haulsa*
Heveningham	Henninham
Holton	Hoton
Lowestoft	Lastoft
Redisham	Retsam
Sotherton	Surriton
Sotterley	Satterley
Southwold	Sowle (or Sole)
Spexhall	Spexle
Ubberston	Ubson
Uggeshall	Outshall
Walberswick	Walsawig
Walpole	Warple (or Wapple)
Westhall	Westill
Yoxford	Yoxer

* Octogenarians say that if, in their early days, our market town had been spoken of as Halesworth, they would not have known what place was being referred to. In the Cratfield Parish Papers, 1592, Halesworth is spelt Hollsur. [Note the spelling of Blythburgh in 1903.]

Ed.

HARRY BECKER (1865-1928)

Harry Becker, born Henry Otto Becker on 17 October 1865 in Colchester, was the fifth of seven children born to his German parents, Charles and Henrietta Becker, who had moved to Colchester from Germany but ten years earlier. He showed aptitude early and at the age of 14 was sent to Antwerp Royal Academy, where he was to study for four years. (Vincent van Gogh is among the best known names to have come out of this prestigious artistic establishment.)

In 1884, still only 19, Becker moved to Paris to continue his artistic studies: the names of the moment here, of course, Degas, Monet, Manet, Singer Sargent, Velasquez, among many other exciting talents. He was to stay in Paris a mere two years, but obviously learned a huge amount, because, on his return to England, he was to have a watercolour accepted into two of the most important exhibitions in London of the time: the Society of British Artists and the Royal Academy. Now living in Colchester again, he would go on to have a watercolour accepted every year into the RA and, in 1892, an oil painting, too.

His move to London in 1894 coincided with the beginnings of 'modern art', but he was by nature and, indeed, training an impressionist and traditionalist so was probably never fully at ease in London, feeling much more at home in a rural landscape, surrounded by rural labourers and the accoutrements of his bucolic subject matter.

This need to feed his artistic hunger led to frequent trips to Suffolk, particularly to Wenhaston (at this stage, from 1909 on, based at Old Hall Farm just outside the village), but also to Kent, where he was to discover Romney Marsh ... and its sheep. Holidays in Holland also kept his subject matter pantry stocked up. Becker is by now married - in 1902 he married a Yorkshire painter named Georgina Maria Waddington. She was a talent in herself, but gave up her own career entirely to promote, protect and preserve that of her husband. She was to outlive him by 30 years, a fact that is no small contribution to Becker's fame today.

Moving to Suffolk permanently in 1912, the couple settled initially in Old Hall Farm but were soon to move into a house called Sunnyside in Wenhaston village. The First World War was soon upon them and even in such a remote place, its effects would never be far away - there were even rumours that Becker was a German spy, but his strident patriotism soon quashed these voices.

After the war, the family (there was now a daughter, Janet) moved to Hinton Lodge, Darsham. The 'Suffolk years', from when he and Georgina moved to Wenhaston to Becker's death in Ipswich Hospital (on 10 September 1928), were marked by financial stresses and uncertainties and even though he had held an exhibition shortly before

his death, these can only have contributed to his untimely death - he was one month short of his 63rd birthday.

More local talents have got together to produce a line-up about Becker, which will be performed at the Cut in Halesworth on 13 April at 8pm. Composer and harpist, Bridget Cousins, has written a clutch of songs that take their names from titles of Becker paintings - these are to be sung by the Halesworth Community Choir; composer Gordon Crosse has written a seven-part orchestral suite (both Bridget and Gordon live in Wenhaston); poet Tom Corbett has written some poems as part of the programme. Do come along to listen to this (world premiere, as the Cut puts it!) concert and listen to Harry Becker's pictures in music and verbal form. (Tickets £10/8.)

An exhibition of the Loftus Collection is, we hope, to be shown at Woottens Plantsman's Nursery in Wenhaston at around the same time. This is well worth seeing.

Ed.

News from the Archivist

Items received after meeting held on 2 October 2012:

Item	Donated by
Parish Council quits	Astrid King
Elizabeth Leighton remembered	Mary King
Bird's eye view of Suffolk	
Southwold harbour and Walberswick	Mary King
British Crabbing programme 1982	Mary King
Eugene von Guerard	
- info via Janet Kohn from Ruth Pullin who has a sketch of the Kohn house - opposite to that drawn by Charles Haite. A book of von Guerard's sketches will be published next year	Janet Kohn
Annual Vestry meeting 22 April 2012	Mary King
<i>East Anglian</i> magazine Nov 1980, Feb, May, June, Aug 1981, March 1982	Mary King
<i>Suffolk Countryside</i> April 1995	Mary King
<i>Suffolk Journal</i> Aug 1998, March 1998	Mary King
<i>Suffolk Magazine</i> Jan 2001	Mary King
<i>Suffolk Norfolk Life</i> July 1998	Mary King

Pat Lancaster

STOP PRESS!

Walberswick is hosting a Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) dig on 1 and 2 May, which will involve *Time Team*-like archaeological digs across 10 sites in the village. Check out: <http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/fieldacademies.html> and <http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/excavationreports.html> (results from Chediston HEFA).