



WALBERSWICK LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 44

SEPTEMBER 2013

A note from the Editor

As reported in the February newsletter, Walberswick hosted an archaeological dig in various gardens around the village. There was a short article about this in the *Village News*, but I have asked our Chairman to provide a fuller report for the History Group newsletter, as the results were most interesting and, perhaps, more than a little surprising. You can find this on pages 2 and 3.

Another item of interest that has come my way is a series of 'study days' running throughout autumn virtually every week, starting on 21 September. Held at Sutton Hoo, they start at 10.15 and finish at 16.15, allowing time for further discussion or a wander. Small group size; cost £38 each (including full day of lectures, tea/coffee through the day, parking, access to NT site and exhibition). Bring a picnic or eat in NT restaurant. I have a flyer that I can email if you are interested. New events are constantly being planned, so 'send us your contact details and we will keep you informed': Cliff (01394 386 498), cliff@wuffingeducation.co.uk. Website: www.wuffingeducation.co.uk. The current programme looks absolutely fascinating.

Finally, does anyone know anything about 'The Spinners', a house that stands at the lower end of Lodge Lane? Again, if you do know something of the history of this house, please contact me with details. Thank you.

Helen Baxter (01502 725 070; helenbaxter@waitrose.com)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 19 October
The Suffolk coast:
from Corton to Felixstowe
Mark Mitchels

Saturday 30 November
Christmas celebration with 'Shipshape':
a musical evening with some history thrown in

All meetings commence at 19.30 in the village hall.

TEST PIT DIG

On Wednesday 1 and Thursday 2 May the Walberswick Local History Group hosted a two-day archaeology test pit dig in the village. This was part of a Higher Education Field Academy course run by Cambridge University, a course designed to help 14 and 15 year olds to increase their awareness and to raise aspirations as to the accessibility of university courses, while at the same time using the time and effort of these youngsters to explore the archaeological history of the village that is playing host to them. In all nine pits were dug in various gardens with a variety of results.

On the day 32 youngsters arrived from three local high schools along with people to look after them. Dr Carenza Lewis and her team of two gave them the introductory breakdown on what they had to do and how the job was to be carried out. This was all very precise and included their drawing plan of the location of each pit and its orientation to north. Each pit was one metre square and one metre deep. As the day progressed and each 20-centimetre layer was excavated, an excavation record had to be filled in by each child: this 16-page record filled in as the work progressed as to what items had been found. Also on hand was John Newman who used to be an archaeologist with Suffolk County Council (he is now retired and working freelance). He was on the spot to give advice as the finds were uncovered and to make sure that the digging and brushing techniques were kept as precise as the original instructions intended.

By lunchtime the youngsters had been divided into eight groups with an adult taking care of them - they had been mixed up, now not knowing other members of their group or not knowing their leader and, picking up their tools, books and lunches, set off for their chosen destination, spread about the village. We all very much hoped that the youngsters would find some evidence as to the history of our village; after all, this was the very first time that an overall survey had been carried out. There has been some field walking, to see what could be found on top of the land, and a number of archaeological watches on building foundations in the last few years, but not a great deal was known about the village, other than it had been recorded that there had been several devastating fires around the 1600s.

I had tried to pick what I thought might turn out to be interesting sites and then had to get the cooperation of the owners to let their lawns be dug up! 'Why lawns?' you may ask. This is so that there is minimal disturbance in the garden and, when the process is over, what little disturbance remains is easily repaired.

By mid-morning of the second day eight of the pits had been finished, so these 32

game youngsters joined forces and managed to dig number nine pit in one and a half hours - by then they really knew what they were doing!

Results

Mid-1st to mid-5th century AD	One pit with pottery (Roman)
Mid-9th to mid-11th century AD	One pit with pottery
Mid-11th to end 14th century AD	Eight pits with pottery
15th to mid-16th century AD	Nine pits with pottery
Mid-16th to end of 18th century AD	Eight pits with pottery
End of 18th to end of 19th century AD	Seven pits with pottery

I would like to thank all those taking part on the two days, especially the owners of the respective gardens for looking after the youngsters so well - I know for a fact that all of them really did appreciate it.

Philip Kett



[Photograph from Philip Kett shows: John Newman in pale blue jumper, who was assisting Dr Lewis, second from right, standing among the archaeological tools of the trade wielded by the diggers; Piers Ford-Crush, 'official photographer' of the dig, far right; some of the youngsters responsible for the digging (one sifting some of the evidence) - and look at the pile of soil that the very neatly dug one metre by one metre by one metre hole has yielded (on blue tarpaulin in background).]

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).

PART 2: 1823-1836

1823, Jany 11th: Yawl, *Seaman's Assistant* of Lowestoft and Crew lost - viz Matthew Colman and Benj Ferret vd Oct 6/35 Jany 8/38.

1823, March 2d: The *Friends* of Hull - wt general Cargo wrecked near Easton Cliff. Crew all perished by taking to their Boat - except the captain who stopped upon the wreck 'till taken off.

1823, Oct 23d: The *Villager* of Newcastle Wm Brown (a Native of this town) Master, his wife and Crew - lost upon the North coast.

1824: The *Dorset* of Dover lost upon Barnard, laden with Spirits.

1827, March 7th: The Sloop *Fame* of came on Shore here laden with Potatoes [but] came a total wreck. Crew saved.

1828, Jany 1st: The *Liberty* of North Shields, came on Shore near the Bond Post - no one on board, broken up and sold.

1828, May 28th: The *North Star* of North Shields wreck'd upon the Barnard. Crew perish'd, her bottom came on shore opposite Gun Hill Feby follow, purchas'd by Mr. Hadinham for £51.

1829, May 27th: *Suffolk* Steam Packet, put into this Harbor on Fire.

1829, Sep 20th: The *Ceres* of London, James Warren, Master. Towed on shore here, laden with Tallow and Isingglass - No person on board - Salvage shares £18.5s each.

1829, Nov 24th: 3 Vessels unknown and Crew lost off here. 1 Vessel went on shore at Walberswick 1 man perished, 2 Vessels on Shore to Southward of Dunwich - [to] wrecks - Crews saved.

1830, Jany 14th: A large quantity of Fir Baulks wash'd on Shore - 2 men Crowford & Langley - each had a leg broken in endeavouring to secure them to the Shore.

1832, Jany 28th: The brig *Cumberland* of Newcastle - about 2 o'Clock P.M. Struck the Barnard Sand and became a total wreck - the Crew was saved thro' the speedy executions of Mr John Montague and Mr John Lowsey of this place - Trinity Pilots.

1832, July 9th: Two brother named Wyatt of Kirtly [Kirkley] and a young man named Colby - whilst trawling off Easton - were caught in a suddon squall of wind - capsiz'd and all drowned - a few days after one of the Wyatt's was trawled up by Jas. Cady of Walberswick, where the body was interred - 20th Octob. following the Boat was swiped up and on the 27th sold by Auction for £14.10s.

1833, April 9: A dismasted Danish Brig laden with Timber Deals et towed on Shore by a Fishing Smack and the *Amicitia* Pilot Cutter. No paper or name to indicate where She belonged. 18th the Vessel was sold by Auction to Mr Abbott, Ipswich for £70, Duty £35.

1835, Oct 6th: Yarmouth Yawl lost - 6 Men perished (leaving 6 Widows and 17 children) they had put a Pilot on board a Spanish vessel in distress - the 7th Man on board the yawl is named Brock - who was picked up the following day by a Trader. Brock had actually been in the water for 16 hours!! he was landed at Yarmouth and is fast recovering from the fatigue and great anxiety he must have endured.

1835, Oct 7th: John Raines Masr of a Timber Barge - *Mary Ann*, London - in the act of putting his Vessel to Sea - accidentally knocked overboard by the 'tiller' and drowned. 18th following his body came on shore - 19th I held an Inquest. Verdict: accidentally drowned.

1835, Oct 25th: Lost near Yarmouth the *Friends Jennings* - bound here with Porter from London. Crew saved.

1835, Dec 19th: Tremendous Gale fro E.N.E. - 23 Vessels on Shore between Kessingland & Corton - Not a life lost!! An account has since been recd dated 21st that upward of 40 Souls perished and that [rest of entry illegible].

1836, Feb 3d: Heavy Gale E.N.E. 5 Colliers and their Crews lost upon the 'Barnard' Sand. One ashore at Kessingland, Crew saved. On the Morning of the 4th - I saw 4 poor fellows upon a piece of wreck off Easton - 2 Ships boats passed - no one in them - 2 came on shore here - the one belonging to the *Jane Kay* of Stocton G.F. Richmond - and the other to the *Speedwell* of South Shields. W. Young Wreck for days was continually coming on Shore.

1836, Feb 18th: Gale N.E. 27 Vessels on shore between Kessingland & Lowestoft all saved. The *Nelson* of Yarmouth Smith - on shore at the back of our South Pier. Crew saved - got off 24th inst.

1836, Mar 1st: The *Anne* of Newcastle, Darling, came on Shore opposite 'New York Cliff' laden with Beans & Wheat. Crew saved.

BLACK TOBY

There follow two very different approaches to the story of 'Black Toby', he of Toby's Walks: the first, slightly more recent is 'Ghostly goings on at the heath', in the *East Anglian Daily Times*, 15 May 2003; the second, 'Suffolk folk tales and legends No. 4 - Black Toby', written by Tom Dereham, is from an unknown source (donated by Hanns Lange), from December 1971.

On the southerly approach to Blythburgh lies a landmark picnic site called Toby's Walks, a hillocky, gorse-topped area with a distant view of the great parish church, the Cathedral of the Marshes.

Local legend has it that back in the mists of time a young soldier, Tobias Gill, who was camping at Blythburgh, wandered drunkenly over the heathland when he encountered a girl named Ann Blakemore. The next morning Ann was found dead, and Toby was arrested for her murder and hanged. The gibbet used for the hanging remained standing for 50 years. When it eventually fell to pieces a thatcher used the nails to make a thatching comb. Toby's ghost is still, so they say, wandering the heath.

The Sandlings heath was originally forest which was cut down to make way for grazing cattle and sheep. The soil, being sandy, is poor, as the nutrients are washed away, and the area became heath land, purple with heather in late summer. Walks was the name given to areas of heath grazed by sheep looked after by shepherds. The hills and hollows of Toby's Walks were formed by quarrying for building materials. The area is now covered with golden flowering gorse, which once provided fuel for humble cottages, but now provides nesting sites for linnets, yellowhammers and whitethroats.

About 220 years ago Sir Robert Rich's Regiment of Dragoons was billeted at Blythburgh, and very smart they looked in their red and white uniforms. They had fought in the great battle of Dettingen, and many a female heart was made to beat faster. Among the soldiers was a negro [sic] drummer, Tobias Gill, known as Black Toby, and black was his reputation for drunkenness and violence.

One night, when he had had too much to drink he was crossing Blythburgh Heath when he met a girl, Ann Blakemore of Walberswick. She was alone and he was in an amorous mood, but she would have nothing to do with him. He ran after her and caught hold of her by the neck. In a drunken frenzy he snatched her handkerchief, fastened it round her throat, knocked her to the ground and pulled the handkerchief till she was strangled. Then he fell over in a drunken stupor.

Next morning some labouring folk on their way to work found him still asleep with the girl lying dead at his feet. It was obvious that he had murdered her, and he was

arrested, not without a fierce struggle. At the inquest he was found guilty of murder, and was kept in Bury Gaol till the Assizes, when he was sentenced to be executed at Blythburgh and his body to be hung in chains at the place where the crime had been committed.

On September 14th, 1750, he was duly hung from a gibbet at the cross roads on Blythburgh Heath, and left dangling there. As the old ballad says: 'An' there he hung till he dropt down,/wore out by winds an' raains.'

The spot came to be known as Toby's Walk, and was supposed to be haunted. It was said that at midnight a carriage came rattling down the road: 'Fower hosses black without no hids,/a Fun ril hus [hearse] behind,/a blaack man settin' on the box/a drivin' loike the wind.'

As Toby had no grave in hallowed ground it was thought that he thus appeared every night to drive himself to Hell, though there was no explanation as to why the journey needed nightly repetition.

Perhaps smugglers took advantage of the legend to discourage interference with their convoys of contraband goods being taken inland. But their activities have ceased long since, and so many East Anglian phantom coaches pulled by headless horses seem to have also gone out of circulation, but the inquisitive reader may go to the lonely crossroads on Blythburgh Heath at midnight to find out whether Black Toby still haunts the scene of his murder of Ann Blakemore two centuries ago.

Phew. I feel the latter piece has the makings of a good film or television serial in it somewhere - our very own 'Broadchurch' or 'Southcliffe', maybe?

One final comment today about Black Toby can come from Maggs' diary, an entry that, as a local magistrate in his own day, he would have been interested to make about Gill's crime: 'A black named Toby Gill was gibbeted today upon Blythburgh Walks, now called Toby's Walks, for the murder or rather "ravishing" of a woman in a field close by called Mickle Field - there was a barn upon those Walks called Toby's Barn, where this man used to resort, which was taken down about the year 1843-4. The two Posts that formed the gibbet are now in a Cart-Lodge at "Westwood Lodge" and has upon them T.G. 1750. After his body hanging in chains for some years the remains were interred upon the spot.'

BLACK SHUCK

Extract from 'The haunted marshlands', by Alasdair Alpin MacGregor, in the *East Anglian Magazine*, April 1961.

Looking eastward from such high ground in the neighbourhood of Blythburgh, in Suffolk, as weathering and erosion have not entirely borne away, one may pick with ease half a dozen of the marshes occupying so much of this haunted corner of East Anglia. For the most part, their continued existence is assured by the sinuous reticulations of the River Blyth's estuarine waters and the tidal nature of Buss Creek. These waters, at full tide, cover a not inconsiderable area in the locality of Blythburgh itself. Conversely, their recession just there leaves at low tide a corresponding area of mud-flats and mud-banks the colour of dark chocolate.

Stretches of these marshlands are not wholly inaccessible to the marshland folk, nor yet to the stranger venturing upon them with care and discretion, as can be seen from the number of footpaths diversifying them. Many of these ancient, pedestrian ways are clearly defined on our maps, such as the Tinker's Walk* and East Sheep Walk, such as Newdelight Walks and Westleton Walks, and, of course, haunted Toby's Walk.

Many of these are intersected by the light railway that operated in this locality for half a century, until 1929, when competitive motor transport brought about its demise. It connected Blythburgh, Southwold and Walberswick with the Great Eastern Railway in Halesworth. Certain stretches of its largely overgrown track the marshland folk eschew long before dusk, believing them to be the haunt of Black Shuck, East Anglia's own particular phantom-dog.

A cottager at Blythburgh assured me the other day that, as recently as 1959, he had seen Black Shuck go bounding over the haunted marshlands visible from the comparatively modest eminence upon which stands Holy Trinity Church, Blythburgh's ancient and beautiful place of worship since the 15th century. Indeed, certain scratches to be found on one of its doors are attributed to Black Shuck's vicious claws on an occasion when he sought to enter the church.

[to be continued ...]

I hope that these three short extracts have whetted your appetite to hear more about both of our local 'black' characters introduced here - I have many more articles about both of them and shall finish this article about the Black Shuck story in the next newsletter.

[* In our first article about Black Toby, the author tells us that the term a walk 'was the name given to areas of heath grazed by sheep looked after by shepherds'. Just in case you thought it had something to do with your daily commune with the black lab ...!]

FROM THE ARCHIVIST

The following is a list of items Pat Lancaster, the History Group Archivist, has received and archived since the last meeting. All these items have been generously donated by members of the History Group and/or village residents. [The 'file name' (e.g. 'Art & artists') refers to the file you should ask for, should you wish to look at something.]

'Archaeological': Note from Philip Kett re 1 and 2 May 2013 dig in village; excavation report and various papers relating to test pit digging in Walberswick 1 and 2 May 2013; Kermont, the Street, archaeological monitoring report December 2010; pottery and details of test pit site Walb/13; photograph and article of gold coin found on Walberswick beach by William English, 1963; Botany Marshes, Buss Creek report DD 2006; test pit reports for 2013.

'Art & artists': article from the *Scotsman*, Jan 1985 - Charles Rennie Mackintosh; Charles Rennie Mackintosh - cards; five postcards of Philip Wilson Steer.

'British Open Crabbing': British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 24 August 1985; British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 6 August 1989; British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 4 August 1991; British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 22 August 1993; British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 10 August 1997; British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 30 August 1998; British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 1 August 1999; British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 28 July 2002; British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 3 August 2003; British Open Crabbing Championship programme for 22 August 2004; British Open Crabbing Championship Silver Jubilee programme, 14 August 2005 (two copies); Crabbing Bridge is named after man who helped save it - Wally Webb; How it all began; Official marshal's card; numerous photographs various years including first ever; article in the *Suffolk Journal*, August 1998; tenth annual article; poster for second year; article in the *Telegraph*, undated - 'Crabs expect a hard time'; article in *Financial Times*, 12 August 2007 - 'Go nab a crab'; 'A day of dread for the humble crab'.

'Church': annual vestry and parochial church meetings; report and accounts for parochial church council 2012; *Heart & Sole*, March 2013 - magazine for the parish; St Andrew's Church new information booklet.

'Houses': property details for 'Mirna', Manor Close, April 2013.

'Mill': article in the *East Anglian Daily Times* - 'When windmills were dashed to the ground'.

'Miscellaneous': exercise notebook on 'Portrait of a village', Anglia TV, filmed August 1965, transmitted 23 May 1966; one postcard of Walberswick Marshes showing watermill, four postcards of Minsmere; fresh production for an energetic anthem fundraising - Denis King and Luke Jeans make video called The Tupperware Brigade; 'Villagers eye £10,000 target for Red Nose Day'; the Black Dog deli - opening 21 May 2013; Westleton Garden Trail.

'Nature': list of birds seen 7-14 June 2013 in and around Windy Nook.

'Parish council': annual parish meeting, 19 April 2012, together with Common Lands Charity report and accounts; photograph of parish council - all members named - 1988/91.

'People': Will Smiley, 23 February 1978-5 April 2013 - thanksgiving service Friday 26 April 2013; green-fingered tradescants; Selwyn Jepson; Ian Balfour, 21 December 1924-14 April 2013; newspaper cutting, Lord Balfour of Inchrye; Ros Jackson - thank you letter.

'Photographs': aerial photographs of Manor Close and surrounds, with negatives, dated C019760.

'Railway': Southwold Railway train staff ticket nos 459, 546 and A155; article in EDP, 23 November 1988 - 'Southwold Railway near end of line at last'; newspaper article, undated - 'Rail line history - memories should be revived by book, *Branch line to Southwold*; Wenhaston station building application.

'Ships & shipbuilding': scaled-down plans for building model sailing drifter/trawler, May 1912.

'Speakers': RSPB info re talk on Saturday 13 April 2013 - Minsmere past, present and future.

'Village hall/Gannon Room': copy of a letter from Grahame Godsmark re village hall loop system.

'Village sign': article from the *North Suffolk Mercury*, possibly 1988 - 'Signing on in style. Blacksmith Hector Moore and tinsmith Laurie Simpson put the finishing touches to the new sign'.

'WI': 90th birthday menu for the WI.

Unnamed ('??'): Folder of miscellaneous papers from Pat Wythe - to be sorted into various files, but mainly covered in Lever Arch file - mostly duplicates; DVD and CD of Radio Norfolk - 'Village life' - undated.