

WALBERSWICK

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO: 58

May 2020 – Lockdown Edition

Newsletter Editor's report

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

"We'll meet again, Don't know where, Don't know when, But I know we'll meet again.....".

Well, actually it will almost certainly be in the Village Hall at 7.00pm (our new starting time) but **when** it will be is anyone's guess. As many of our members are above a certain age and our meetings often attract more than 50 people then it could be after the summer of 2021.

However, see below for a new initiative

As mentioned above, many of our members may be in the last group to be released from lockdown. Even when this happens there could be an appreciable number who may not be comfortable attending meetings of large numbers of people. In addition, getting speakers may also be a challenge. In order to keep in contact and to add value to your membership, we thought that we could increase the frequency of our Newsletters. Therefore, you are receiving this, the first of our "lockdown Newsletters", by email, whatever your original preference. If you simply prefer a hard copy then we are asking you to print your own during these times. We have a list of the small minority of people who do not have email and have made arrangements for these (if you are sharing a home with one of these please print and pass on a hard copy).

Distribution by email has a number of advantages in addition to safety, saving on printing and saving on shoe leather:

- We can send them out easily at whatever interval we want
- There need not be any minimum or maximum set on length
- We can be "heavy" on photographs as these come up well on the screen
- Photographs can be viewed in glorious colour (assuming that they are colour photographs).

We could probably easily increase the frequency of Newsletters by using our extensive archive and I will be asking our archivist, Pat Lancaster, if she can do a "from the archive" feature for each edition. However, there must be hundreds of stories out there and hundreds of pictures. Our members love old photographs and especially if there are people in them. So, please send in anything, however short, about old Walberswick and with a picture or two if you have them. Remember, this lockdown is history in the making, so anything counts as history. However, if you do write about anyone alive please make sure you have their permission! The following article is one I quickly put together around some old photographs.

John English - Newsletter Editor – email johnrenglish@tiscali.co.uk

Three Walberswick Cottages before the War

The three houses in the picture are Fern Cottage, Fair View and Beach View. The man with the dog is George English (1858-1945). The iron railings probably date the picture to pre-1945. All three houses were originally built for and owned by George. The money to purchase these “new builds” came from fishing. His brother, William, owned Rose Cottage and Beach View was built attached to the older Rose Cottage.

George and his wife Mary lived in Fern Cottage and all seven of their children were born and raised there. The other two properties were rented out. Mary was the brother of Sam May and no doubt the English and May families were well known to each other. Mary died in 1939 and George in 1945 (he died after falling down stairs). George and Mary can be seen in their younger days in the picture, bottom right. George, who became later known as “Captain George” had a liking for being photographed in uniform and many of these pictures survive. George can be seen in uniform, with his crew, in the bottom picture.



Three of the four boys from the marriage emigrated to North America, two before WWI. George’s houses were gifted or left to his remaining children. All but one was sold. However, one cottage still remains in the English family. It passed from George to his son Bob, to Bob’s wife Ada, to their son Owen and then to Owen’s nephew. Bob can be seen in the picture to the right. He is the bigger of the two boys. The boy with curls is probably Samuel George English (1891-1975). He settled in Bozeman, Montana. Sadly, his only son, George, was killed in 1944 in a naval battle in WWII.



As we deal with lockdown I remember that George and Mary’s children survived WWI, a Spanish flu pandemic, recession and WWII.

John English



Walberswick 100 Years Ago

One hundred years ago the UK was emerging from the last great pandemic. The word “unprecedented” has been used a great deal in the last weeks and months but this is clearly not the case. What is happening now is not unprecedented, though it is a different virus and the world has changed greatly since 1920. The pandemic of 1918-20 seems to have left no easily detectable trail in Walberswick. It would be amazing if no Walberswick person was affected during the three waves of Spanish flu that swept the country but without a detailed search of records of the time we could reasonably assume that.

Several reasons for the lack of records are possible. The first is that when Spanish flu first struck in May 1918 the country was still at war. Young men had been dying and were continuing to die in terrible numbers. In the UK Spanish flu killed around 250,000 people. This loss, greatest at the end of 1918, overlapped with the loss of over 700,000 people in WWI. With a population of just over 45 million these losses were enormous. The government and the public certainly had much to deal with.

The second possible reason why so little remains in Walberswick may be that life continued much as usual. The war was the biggest priority. In addition, there was little to be done about the flu. There were no effective treatments and no vaccination. There was also no NHS to use or to protect. Death came quickly to those who were to die. The government did very little, in general schooling continued, work continued and you could still get a haircut. It is uncomfortable fact now but a hundred years ago “herd immunity” was what halted the pandemic.

Our WLHG archives contain nothing on Spanish flu. One thing that may link 1920 and 2020 could be good, fresh Walberswick air. Those fortunate enough to live in the countryside, where social distancing comes easy, will always be at an advantage where a respiratory virus is concerned. Suffolk has few large towns and Walberswick would have been a long way from anywhere. The Ipswich Star recently reported *“Suffolk recorded 975 deaths from flu between the weeks ending June 29, 1918, and May 10, 1919. There were few cases until November, 1918, where there was a spike. The largest number of deaths was in the week of November 23, when 66 people died in West Suffolk and 56 in East Suffolk”*. <https://www.ipswichstar.co.uk/news/spanish-flu-deaths-in-suffolk-topped-975-1-6523479>.

Is there any proof for this beyond what you might intuitively expect to be the case? Back in 2008 a paper in a prestigious journal on the Spanish flu mortality pattern concluded *“The most important factor associated with death rate in our study was urbanization, with cities and towns experiencing approximately 30–40% higher death rates than rural areas”*. (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2596813/>)

It is far too early now but hopefully when it is time to write the history of this pandemic Walberswick will again not get a mention. However, we would like our WLHG archives to say something about this time in our lives. What have you been doing during lockdown? Please write and let us know. We do not expect it to be exciting but in some ways the more mundane the better. For me, “Zoom” has taken on a whole new meaning. Please can we leave a record for generations to come about how we lived and coped with lockdown in Walberswick in 2020.

Ref: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/in-pictures-52564371>

John English - Editor

Obituary on a past WLHG archivist

Tony Rees 1927 – 2020

The History Group Committee, both past and present, were very sad to see the announcement of the passing of Tony Rees. Tony was Archivist to the History Group from 1992 to 2008 (taking over from Miss J Sheldon) when he moved to Oxford to be near his family. He lived in Bramble cottage, The Common.

Tony wrote a very in-depth document on **Walberswick Wells, Water and Sanitation** in 1997 and, together with his brother Alan T Rees, was involved in the composition of **Mouth of the River Blyth** in 2014. It is interesting to note that when the Committee thanked Tony for all his hard work and dedication over the years, Tony said that *there was eventually so much "stuff" that he had had to build a hut in his garden.....*

Tony was a quiet, unassuming man who contributed greatly to the History Group. Our thoughts are with his family.

Pat Lancaster, Archivist, WLHG, March 2020

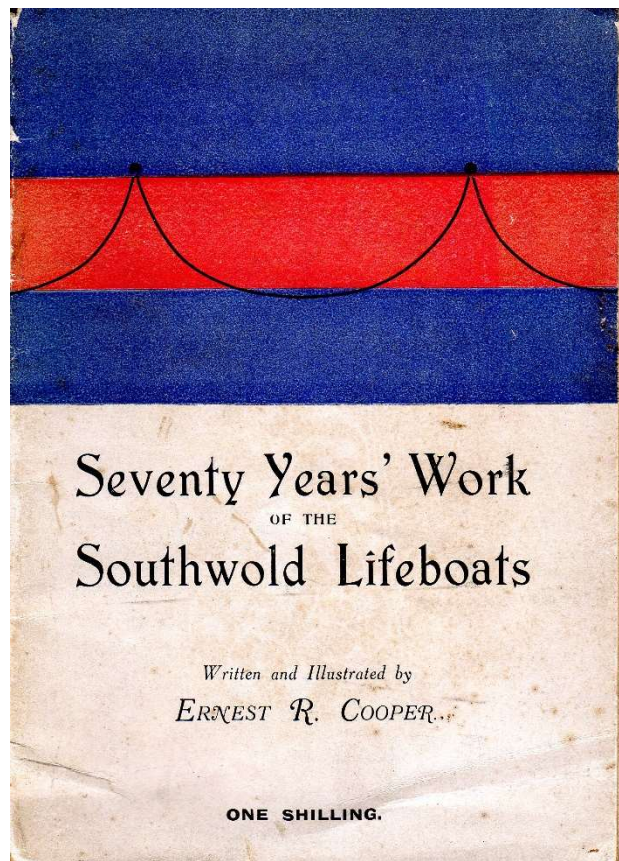
Rare Pamphlet Located

Ernest Read Cooper is probably a familiar name to people who know Southwold and Walberswick. For many years I have had an original hardback copy of his book **Storm Warriors of the Suffolk Coast**, first published in 1937. Like some of his other books this has been re-published and the last time I looked this updated, edited and revised edition was still in local shops. I have read and re-read chapter 5 on Samuel Charles May a few times. I am drawn to it as Sam May was my great-grandmother's brother but also because of the following sentence:

Samuel Charles May was born in Southwold in 1860, son of James May, who met the headless woman on the Gunhill, the day on which he and John Hurr rescued Robert English, after his twin boys had already been drowned (see *Seventy Years' Work of the Southwold Lifeboats*).

For many years I scoured second-hand bookshops for the work referred to with no success, eventually giving up. Unknown to me, my wife continued the search and eventually located a copy on-line. She is that sort of person and I have to thank her. "Seventy Years' Work of the Southwold Lifeboats" turned out to be a pamphlet written around 1912 and covers the period 1840 to 1912. It was priced at one shilling (see opposite) but my wife will not tell me what she had to pay for this rare copy.

The "headless woman" story occurs early on in the section on the first lifeboat. On the 1st July 1845 Robert English and his two sons put to sea before daybreak "for the purpose of catching soles". Later in the day a violent storm made them turn for home but the boat was driven on to a



sandbank and upset. The two sons were drowned but the father seized two oars to support him and was then carried out to sea. This was about 11:00 am and the drama was observed by people on the cliffs (presumably Southwold). Luckily for the father he was picked up by another boat running for home. This boat, The Dart, crewed by James May and John Hurr then got into trouble but after great drama the occupants were rescued by the Southwold Lifeboat (the "Solebay"). The coxswain of the lifeboat is listed as Isaac Jarvis.

E R Cooper records that the two drowned boys were twins about 10 years old. Cooper was told that they hung on to their father's legs and nearly drowned him. He further recounts that their father, in his struggles, kicked them off, an involuntary act for which the boys' mother never forgave him. It is very sad if any of this is true. Robert and his wife Louisa (ne Chapman) had 10 children, all born before this tragedy. They both lived to around 83, about 40 years after the accident. It would be sad indeed if this event cast a shadow that long. Given the violence of the storm and the distances from shore to ship the view from Southwold cliffs could not have been very good but the truth and a good story often differ. Certainly the story was further dramatized afterwards by May and Hurr. The story goes that as they were crossing Gun Hill at two in the morning, before setting off to sea, they saw a headless woman who turned off the path just before they met. They were convinced that this was a warning, but presumably only in retrospect as they set off regardless. Superstition has always been big in this area. One thing that can be contested is that the boys were 10 year old twins. My records show that James was about 15 and William 16. Two of the drowned boys' brothers went on to head up two branches of the English family that are still represented in the area today. Robert English junior married Lydia Deal and were my great-great-grandparents. Charles English married Emma Cullingford and their descendants, via "Dubba" English, are well known.

John English - Editor

Threeways



Figure 1 Threeways, apparently called Wayside Cottage, soon after its construction

In 1903 Frank Jennings the architect paid £420 for three plots on the Mill Field, the first three on the right as you enter Millfield Road. The vendor was William Howard who had bought a large acreage to the South of The Street for £610 in 1889 and laid out thirteen building plots.

Jennings sold on the Threeways plot in 1904 for £160 to a London surgeon called Raymond Johnson. Jennings and Johnson were

closely involved in the development of the Mill Field; Jennings was the architect of several of the houses and Johnson seems to have been the financier. He became a joint owner of Gazebo (now Te Awahou) in the early years and was living at Red Cottage (now Lushan) opposite in 1904. Within a few years, Jennings had built Threeways, Gazebo, Greyroof and Far End (now Aldebaran).

Raymond Johnson is recorded as living at Threeways in 1912 but his professional life was in London and it is not clear how often he, his wife Mary and daughters Audrey and Marjory were in Walberswick. He sold the house in 1919 for £1,000 through a strange arrangement involving a barrister called Wilberforce Ross Barker. He would go on to become Sir Ross Barker CB, a senior civil servant in the India Service but in 1919 he made a tidy profit of £187 out of Threeways. For some

reason, the purchaser Harry Silver paid Raymond Johnson £1,000 and Wilberforce Barker £187. Kelly's directory lists someone called William Barker as living at Threeways in 1916. If this person was actually Wilberforce Barker, then perhaps Johnson had sold him a tenancy of some sort and the £187 was compensation for moving out.

The new owner of Threeways, Harry Silver, was a designer at the Silver Studio, a family design business at Brook Green, Hammersmith. The studio is credited with a major role in the development of British Art Nouveau and designed many of the textile and wallpaper patterns marketed by companies like Liberty's and Sanderson. The house at Brook Green was the Silver's home as well as their workplace and Harry lived there as a young man. The male designers worked at the studio while the female ones were required to work from home. One of their most famous designers was Archibald Knox who moved to Liberty's and was instrumental in developing the unique Liberty style. Harry and Josephine Silver, and their children Erica, Gabriel and Lancelot would have used Threeways as a holiday home.

In 1924 the house was sold to Alfred Channon Fincken, whose "Force" breakfast cereal and its mascot Sunny Jim would have been a familiar sight on breakfast tables in the first half of the twentieth century. Alfred Fincken had been employed by the American Force Food Company and in 1910 he set up on his own importing Force and by 1930 they were selling 12.5 million cartons a year. His wife was Annie and their son was called Burleigh.

The Finckens owned Threeways for three years, selling it in 1927 to Cecilia Rose Elizabeth Morgan who was the first owner to use it as a permanent home. Mystery surrounds this lady. In 1911 she was living under the name Cecilia Ball at 67 Parkwood Road Bournemouth with her mother Agnes Ball, her father an organist having died. In the electoral roll for 1927 she was still at Parkwood Road but was described as Mrs Cecilia Morgan and there is no record of a Mr Morgan at the same address. In the 1927 deeds of Threeways she is described as Mrs Cecilia Morgan, married woman. Cecilia did become a married woman, but not until 1934 when she married Henry Cecil Morgan. He had been married before, in Hong Kong in 1916 and that marriage had been dissolved in 1926.

The 1939 register for Walberswick shows that there was a young man called Henry WB Stafford Morgan living with Cecilia. This was almost certainly Cecilia's illegitimate son by Henry Morgan. Young Henry had been born in 1916 when Cecilia was living under her maiden name in Bournemouth. Henry Morgan must have travelled to Hong Kong and married another woman in the year of his son's birth.

Henry and Cecilia's 1934 marriage certificate describes her as "Cecilia Rose Elizabeth Morgan, formerly Ball, Spinster." He is described as a 45-year-old Commissioner of Chinese Customs, living at 1 Cromwell Crescent London. It seems unlikely that the couple ever lived together in Bournemouth or Walberswick. Perhaps the 1934 marriage was a rather belated device to legitimise young Henry and it must have been a relief for Cecilia to be able to say with honesty that she was married.

There is a further element to the story of Cecilia's son; the author George Orwell may well have been his tutor. This is an abridged extract from a letter Orwell wrote several years later to the writer and art critic Sacheverell Sitwell:

I was out walking with a backward boy I was tutor to at that time. Under a gorse bush the boy noticed a neatly tied-up parcel. It was a cardboard box about 10" by 6" by 3". Inside it was lined with cloth and made up like a little room, with tiny furniture made of matchwood and scraps of cloth. There were also some female garments including underclothes and a scrap of paper with "This is not bad is it". I felt convinced that it had been made by someone suffering from some kind of sexual aberration.

A strange conclusion and one that has provided Orwell biographers with scope for much conjecture.

In his book "Orwell: The Life", DJ Taylor says that in 1930 Orwell tutored a young Walberswick teenager called Bryan Morgan who was disabled by polio and rather "backward". In 1930 Cecilia's

son Henry would have been fourteen years of age, he was certainly incapacitated and perhaps the B in his name stood for Bryan. Taylor says that the Morgans were rather well to do and lived in a house on one side of the main "Walberswick Road" and owned land on the other side. Threeways is on the main road and at that time it owned some land on the North side of the Street, now the site of Admiral House; the entrepreneurial surgeon Raymond Johnson had bought the land from the Blois estate in 1911. Cecilia was by no means well off; she re-mortgaged her house regularly but perhaps she gave the impression of wealth. As for the suggestion that Bryan was "backward", there is no evidence of this.

Ronald Binns, a recent biographer of Orwell says that Bryan Morgan lived with his parents but here is no trace of HC Morgan ever living at Three Ways. However, in the 1939 register there is a man called Arthur SB Watson, a retired sea captain living there. If he is the person Binns refers to he would have been forty-eight years old in 1930 so perhaps could have passed for the father. Of course, the fact that he was there in 1939 is no indication that he was there in 1930 when Orwell was visiting.

Taylor describes a sixteen-year-old local girl called Dora Georges who spent some time with Orwell and Bryan Morgan when they were in the habit of studying on the plot on the other side of the road. Orwell wrote her a poem entitled "Ode to a Dark Lady", but Dora was unimpressed.

Cecilia sold Threeways in 1945 and in December 1951 she and her son, then described as Brian HH Stafford Morgan, took a voyage to Madeira. Brian HH Stafford Morgan is certainly the Henry Morgan who was at Three Ways in 1939 and the name Brian helps the case for Orwell having tutored him. In the passenger manifest Cecilia and Brian's address was given as 31 Parkstone Road, Poole, so it seems that they moved to a house very close to the one they had before they came to Walberswick. As for Captain Arthur Watson, it looks as though he made the move as well; there is a record of someone of that name dying in Poole in 1950.

Edward Wright 2020

Excerpts from the Archives -

George Charles Haite

8 June 1855 – 31 March 1924

George Charles Haite was an English designer, painter, illustrator, and writer. His most famous work is the iconic cover design of the Strand Magazine launched in 1891 which helped popularise the Sherlock Holmes stories of Arthur Conan Doyle. Haite was also a founder member and the first president of the London Sketch Club.

Some 13 original pen sketches (dating 1895 and 1897) were donated to The History Group in October 2010 by a Mr Chris Rutherford from West Sussex, framed by Pat Lancaster, and are held by various Committee members for safe keeping. Here are 2 examples:

See all the sketched on our website -
<http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/assets/WLHG/Haite/HAITE-GEORGE-CHARLES-joined.pdf>

Archivist

