



# WALBERSWICK

## LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO: 59

June 2020 – Lockdown Edition

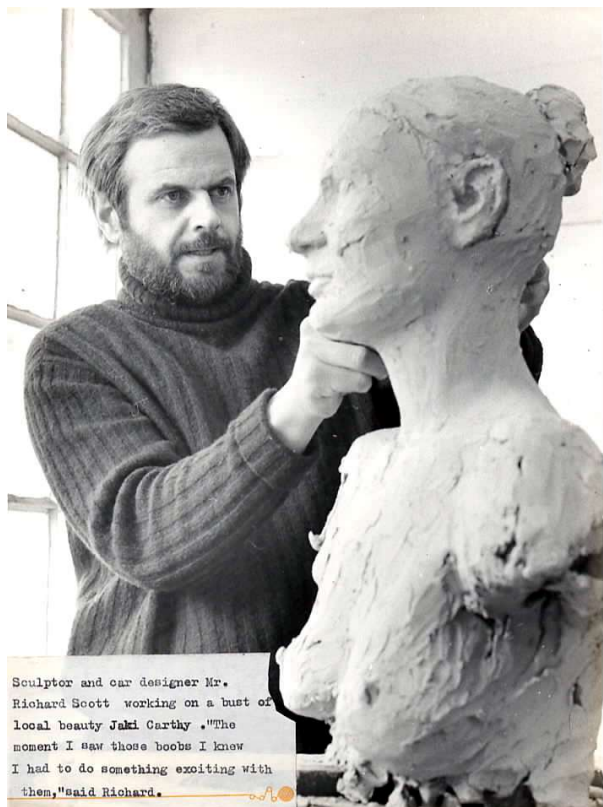
### Newsletter Editor's report

#### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

For reasons that need no explanation there are still no dates for your diary. However, we would normally have had our AGM by now. Following the implementation of lock-down in late March, the Committee took the unanimous decision to postpone this year's AGM until further notice – minuted on 25 March 2020. We hope the AGM can be held later in the year when the lockdown rules permit it.

One of our long-term members and a big contributor to WLHG Newsletters past was Richard Scott. Richard first moved to Walberswick in 1951, the year that I was born. Richard knew all the people I knew (and more) but he knew them as an adult. I just listened to all the stories, not all of them complimentary. Richard was always able to pen a sympathetic and affectionate memoir. He could always find the good. Richard was a convivial man who in his younger days enjoyed chatting to people in The Bell and The Anchor amongst other places. This is where he would meet some of the people he wrote and talked about. He was well acquainted with many of the "characters" so abundant in the second half of the last century. These were people like my distant relative "Jimmy" who Richard knew so much better than me. Richard was also a man of great intellect and that gave him access to other groups of people in the village. In later years this made him a source for historical investigation. "Talk to Richard" was always useful and rewarding advice.

Now it is time to talk about Richard. In this electronic age his obituary has already appeared on the Walberswick web site. This affectionate post made me laugh as it showed me a side of Richard I did not know. If you missed it, or cannot find it, then click here <http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/news-posts/news/view/491>. The picture that made me laugh can be seen to the right.



Sculptor and car designer Mr. Richard Scott working on a bust of local beauty Jaki Carthy. "The moment I saw those boobs I knew I had to do something exciting with them," said Richard.

The first article in this edition is a highly-edited transcript of a conversation Richard had with Jason Bowyer. Jason went with the intention of having an artist-to-artist chat but ended up talking more about cars.

The second article is another transcript, this time of Richard talking to Edward Wright. Again, we have had to edit it. Edward has just finished his book on Millfield Road and gleaned lots of information from Richard. There will be more information on Edward's book in the next Newsletter.

When this lockdown is over, when The Bell and The Anchor are serving again and when it is deemed safe for us oldies to gather we will raise a glass (or two) to Richard, a Walberswick legend.

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## **Artist to Artist – Richard Scott interviewed by Jason Bowyer**

In November 2018 Jason Bowyer interviewed Richard Scott "artist to artist". Jason wrote to me "*I wanted him to tell me his story. It's not a journalist's take but a friends' interview. He was on the parish council for four years but we never made it onto that topic. Car design and manufacturing in Halesworth was an important part of his life....fascinating and not that close to painting or writing.*"

Richard and Jason were of different generations but as dedicated artists they spoke the same language. There are a number of parallels. Neither was native to Walberswick but both loved the place and both painted in the village extensively. Both had an artist for a father and that father introduced them to Walberswick at a young age. Richard's father was Eric Scott and the transcript gives more information about how he came to Walberswick. Jason's father, Bill Bowyer, was well known in Walberswick and he and his wife Vera lived here in retirement until relatively recently.

About four months after the interview, on 17th February 2019, Jason died, prematurely and unexpectedly. Poignantly, the interview ends with Jason saying to Richard "*I would like to have talked more about your own paintings but I think we will have to leave it there for the minute and perhaps have another discussion another time*". Sadly, that further discussion never took place and the story remains more "artist to car enthusiast".

While this issue is dedicated to Richard Scott I would like to say how much we, who knew him, miss Jason. I remember all the fun summers we had which always culminated at the end of the season with the Bowyer vs Village cricket match. This tradition, started by Bill Bowyer, carried on after his death as the whole family loved their cricket. In Bill's day I would never have got into the team as it was so competitive. As we all got older I got my chance. I really would have liked to have shown a picture of the players after a match but the GDPR issues scared me off. Instead, I will mention one of Jason's other passions – paella on the beach. Jason loved to cook and when the weather was right he loved to cook paella on the beach. To the right is a picture of Jason in relaxed mode dancing with your editor after one such paella.

Richard's enthusiasm about the things in his life was obvious. Curiously Jason and Richard did not discuss the Walberswick Scroll. Richard was certainly passionate about the scroll and with his stamina decreasing in his final years he made certain that the



showing of the scroll in the village would continue. I was honoured that he passed onto me the “guardianship” of this unique record of Walberswick from the summer of 1931. Indeed we now have a small band of enthusiasts doing what Richard did alone for many years. Richard died shortly before we all went into lockdown. But for COVID-19 there would have been a showing of the scroll this year dedicated to Richard. We will not forget to celebrate his legacy when circumstances permit.

When Jason sent me the long, and sometimes rambling, recording of the interview it was envisaged that I would write something for the WLHG based on it. I put it aside, working on other material, and then sadly Richard passed away too. I was fortunate to catch him at home shortly before he died in March. We talked about his medical condition but mostly about the Heritage Hut and the scroll. As I was leaving he told me what a lucky man he was

I am indebted to Pat Lancaster for patiently transcribing the recording, something which would have taken me a month of Sundays. With the consent of both families we are putting the recording and the transcript in the archive for future generations. The recording is a verbatim record of the conversation and therefore not always coherent. It is not even totally correct, as the family have pointed out. The corrections will be archived along with the recording.

Below are some highlights I have selected and edited. The family have ensured that any errors have been corrected. We have also added explanations inside [ ] where it would be helpful e.g. Royles [Royle Publications].

**Why Walberswick:** My father was a water colourist. He was born in India and came to England when he was 18 and wanted to be an artist but you had to be fairly wealthy to get any kind of training so he became an electrical engineer and finished up as District Engineer for Bromley, Beckenham and Penge and lived in Bromley. While he was still working full time, he produced lots of work. Eventually he decided to take the plunge and he went freelance and he decided to move to a village near Rye. At that point my father had dealings with Royles [Royle Publications], the card people. The chap who ran that was the chap who got Penguin books underway – Noel Carrington. [Historical inaccuracy - he actually worked for Penguin and founded the Puffin imprint.]. He was a regular visitor to Walberswick and stayed near Toby Robinson’s summer after summer. We were talking about moving to Sussex and Noel Carrington said “why not move to Walberswick, it has everything an artist would want”.

**Samphire Cottage:** My parents bought this house. It was square with a rounded corner but upstairs was roof space to the balcony - that was always used as my father’s studio. He came down here in 1951 [The house was purchased in 1950]. Unfortunately, he was in very bad health and he died in 1960 having had 9 years here. He was 56 when he died, I was 22. It was towards the end of my National Service.

**Cookery Nook:** I had to leave (school) at 16 as my father had his serious heart attack. My mother opened a cake shop opposite Fisher’s Garage and the Anchor. It had previously been a chip shop and sweet shop run by Daisy Meakins. It worked fairly well and made Walberswick Homemade Fudge, sent all over the world, having advertised it in the Times. Jimmy Meakins had a motorbike with a sidecar. Every Friday my mother used to pay the rent to Mrs Meakins who ran a guest house at Rose Cottage. The kitchen was something else. One Friday she had been in and came back suppressing laughter. Mrs Meakins had been making pastry for everyone on the kitchen table and Jim was sitting at the other part of the table dismantling his Royal Enfield gearbox. The oil and flour were gently converging in the middle. If the guests could only see it.

**After School:** Aged 16 – what do I do? I’ll go to art school. I went to an intermediate school in Lowestoft. I lodged in Pakefield for 2 years. Then there was the business of national service as I was coming to 18. But you could get deferment to complete your training, which was 4 years, if you did your NDD [National Diploma in Design] as it was then There I had a bit of a problem as I was taught

by a dynamic chap who was very, very sound really and pushed us really hard, but he had great aversion to anyone who had what he thought was a privileged background. Mine wasn't that privileged but by his definition it was. There was no way he was going to have me on his NDD course. I thought of going to London and I did get to London but not as a painter as Tom Hudson said, 'You'll never be a painter in a hundred years. But I suppose you are handy with a bit of clay, you could be a sculptor.' With no more thought than that I had to apply to Hammersmith and Camberwell Sculpture Schools. I got accepted by both of them and it was a case of choice really. I went to Hammersmith first and then Camberwell and came into contact with the most charismatic character which was Karel Vogel. I was 20 when I went into the army. I did basic training at Britannia Barracks in Norwich where the CO was Brian Dillon (Miriam's late husband), great raconteur and in later years used to have a drink with him in The Anchor and he used to tell me some entertaining stories of the RSM. After National Service I came back to London and lived in Camberwell. I met Lesley [Née Munkman] at Art College. We lived there till 1965. I was doing 2 or 3 things. All quite interesting. Firstly part-time teaching and sculpture technician and then I got involved in the racing-car business. I was lodging in Peckham at that time and came across a chap who was washing down one of these 750-formula racing cars in the street and got talking to him. Cut a long story short, I got involved. I got quite good at that. I was quite good at finding people who wanted a set of wishbones made. Later on I was selling a few paintings.

**Return to Walberswick:** Then my mother remarried and moved to the other end of the village [Actually to the middle of the village, to Paule's Fenn.]. The downstairs bit of the house (this was Samphire cottage) became vacant and Lesley was desperate to move out of London. We rented it from my Mother and I hoped to get a job at Ipswich School of Art. The involvement with cars continued in the lock up garage here and for 12 years I had a "one time" stable in Halesworth, behind the chip shop, downstairs where the horses lived I was never going to make any serious money. I couldn't make enough cars or money but basically I had this rather delightful historically interesting place, then it was Naylor's Yard [Prime Coachworks was across the road]. I had it at an affordable price for rent (1965/66) as the new road, Saxons Way, was just about to be built. It got put back and put back and it was 1978 before work started. I could have stayed there [he means he would have liked to stay there] but I had to leave fairly quickly. I was making frames for another manufacturer and had made frames for him before. Then I had to get out of Halesworth. I managed to rent a charming little barn between Metfield and Fressingfield. Anyway I was starting to change direction. I had quite a bit of teaching on the Foundation and General Art and Design and I stood in for people being off sick and then suddenly I got the opportunity to go full time. From 1982 – 1995 when I took early retirement. Lesley was trying to be a sculptor. She was busy with children. We stayed more than the intended time. Then my Mother's second husband died.

**Painting:** I was interested in unusual conditions of light. I did a series of paintings of Covehithe Church in its various moods and Anglia TV did a little feature of me and Covehithe but it wasn't till 2007. Then I got involved with the Suffolk Group. I was a founder member, but it was Mike Kelly really who started it and I used to exhibit where I could [he became president, and is still listed as such on the Group's website! He was heavily involved and always supported and exhibited]. It is the whole business of light which is the interesting thing to me. It could be anywhere if it had the right ingredients.

**Art History:** I was also interested in the history and artists of Walberswick back in the 1980s. I started to collect information. I am not a great historian, but I had a lot of stuff and when I was first doing it people were still alive that had links with various people. Doing the Mackintosh research I was lucky enough to meet all sorts of people. I met Mary Sturrock and I also knew E A Walton's granddaughter and she told me a lot and she used to come almost every year. Mary Sturrock came and they stayed in the top house of the Terrace or the one next to it. The other person who cropped up was Nicky Roberts who was the great granddaughter of Newbury and various people who had lots of information. [Richard then discusses Mackintosh and Wilson Steer]. Every 2 years I went to Penzance to look at the Penlee House collection and to St Ives and the last time I went, I was limited as I couldn't walk very far. But I went to Sancreed where Munnings had a wife who

committed suicide – his first wife. He was a dominant figure. His wife got in a state of deep depression which in some way led to her taking her own life. She was buried at Sancreed which is inland.

Richard's book "Artists at Walberswick" was published in 2002.

## **Richard Scott talking to Edward Wright**

Thanks to an introduction from Bill Ungless, Richard offered to help me with my work on the people who lived in Millfield Road and I recorded a chat with him January 2020. Some of the names may be unfamiliar:

**Fred Bennett:** a pioneer of the motor industry in the early years of the 20th Century, Fred imported the first Cadillac cars into the UK and was himself an intrepid motorist. He retired to Gazebo, now Te Awahou.

**Philip Alexander:** He lived at Far End, now Aldebaran where he worked as a silversmith in the Arts and Crafts style. His daughter Catherine married Noel Carrington, brother of the Bloomsbury artist Dora Carrington. It was through Noel, the founder of Puffin Books that Richard came to Walberswick. Philip's daughter Margaret became a leading calligrapher.

**Iris Birthwhistle:** an eccentric art dealer and poet who had a gallery in chicken sheds in the garden of Millfield House. She reputedly sold David Hockney drawings at £5 each.

Q: Fred Bennett?

A: I can't say I knew him that well, but my father did. He was an artist and he died quite young. Between coming here and dying he used to take a little bit of the rough side of life away by going to the Anchor where one of his principal companions was Fred Bennett. So, we got to hear all about the Cadillac. He used to use it quite regularly for local running around and particularly collecting visitors from Darsham. Very often you would encounter him bowling along at quite a decent speed in this 1903 Cadillac and the thing about the Americans at that stage in automobile history, they managed to make very reliable cars and the Cadillac was one such and it did its thousand mile trial in 1903 when it was new and without any trouble. And then fifty years later in '53 he thought he would celebrate the half century by doing it again, same route whatever that was but it was quite an ambitious one. And yeah, he used it quite a bit and it wasn't in any precious way.

The Village Fete at that time was just a Conservative fete, actually they only had conservatives in Walberswick, I imagine it's the same now. Anyway, Fred was persuaded to make one of the attractions Cadillac rides up the road. Yes, the fete was in the garden of Adyar which was opposite the Church and is now completely remodelled. And Adyar had quite a large separate garden on the other side of the back road and that was where the fete was every year and that was the base for this thing. We all paid our money for a ride in the Cadillac and we were then treated to a bit of a sprint up the road to Eastwood Lodge Farm you see. I remember when we got there the first time in the back of my mind was hang on a minute he's supposed to be turning in there but we were not slowing down noticeably we just swung in from the metalled road on to this new surface and did a graceful 180 degree turn sending up a great shower of shingle and rubbish and so on and much to the delight of all the ladies on board who were squeaking with delight at this adventure and we came back again. That was the only time I went in it.

Q: When would that have been, in the 50's?

A: Yes, it was around the time of the thousand-mile trial, yes it would have been in the 50's. We as a family were here in the 50's, I've obviously come and gone since in various directions and come back

here quite a long time ago now. Our first visit to Walberswick was in 1949 we came across on the rowing boat ferry with two old Crosses, Ernie Cross and Bob Cross senior.

Q: I think you would have been here when Philip Alexander was here. The silversmith from Millfield Road.

A: Yes, Oh yes. The extent of my knowledge of him was really I used to go for walks and energetic little runs around that end of the village and so on and quite often used to encounter Philip Alexander, he was a wiry old boy who always wore plus fours so the nearest we got was exchanging a good morning and passing.

Q: And his pieces are very highly sought after in the Arts and Crafts style.

A: Yes

Q: And his wife was also a painter and his two daughters. One daughter became a very famous calligrapher.

A: That was Margaret Alexander.

Q: She became the official calligrapher to the House of Lords, I think. Her sister Catherine was a talented artist who was commissioned to do a series of posters for London Underground. She married Noel Carrington who was the Puffin man.

A: Well, Noel Carrington. If I single out one person from the last century who more than anyone else was influential in me being here right now it is Noel Carrington because he was in the Puffin Books business, but he was also Royle Cards and my father did quite a lot of his paintings. I didn't realise at that point that he was actually a regular visitor to Walberswick.

Q: Yes, so that was the Noel Carrington connection?

A: The way it developed was my father did these card designs, landscapes and so on and he had a London agent just off Piccadilly and this London agent was very successful with commercial dealings to get things printed and so on. There were two old girls, very homely old tweedy women who ran this rather swish business and they got my father quite a lot of work and he did things like paintings of the interiors of hotels and that sort of thing, they were rather up market hotels.

Q: And he was one of your father's great sources of work?

A: He was very supportive of my father in suggesting the right way to go. He went back a long way because we lived in Bromley and my father was not in good health and he was going to take early retirement from the electricity board for which he was district engineer and he was going to take the ultimate chance and set himself up as a full time painter. And Carrington was very very supportive really in advising him. At that stage I remember my father had found a place in Winchelsea which was a favourite spot and he did a couple of trips down to Winchelsea and found a beautiful smallish house that had everything they wanted and got fairly near making an offer for this place and my mother went to visit it and knocked that on the head.

I remember it was that week my father ran into Noel and he said how are you getting on Eric with your Winchelsea project and he said I am afraid that has folded because Marjorie's found a ghost in it. It was at that stage that Carrington said to my father have you thought about Walberswick and my father said no but obviously Carrington gave it the big sell because we booked a short holiday in Southwold in 1949 and came to give it the once over and I remember that terribly well. In those days it wasn't that easy to get accommodation and things like hotels and guest houses were all booked up but there were two places in Dunwich Road which is at right angles to the sea front about halfway down the promenade. I can't remember the name of the place.

They had space and it was relatively cheap and my father had aspirations to expertise in handwriting and indications which it might have on, you know, people's characters. Anyway my father wrote off to the two cheapest places that could put us up for a couple of weeks and got replies and one was four guineas a week and one was seven guineas a week but the seven guinea reply was on a large

piece of pink writing paper with big extravagant handwriting. The four guinea one was on a mean little piece of paper and on that my father based that we would go to the posh one. How wrong can one be? We got to this place and it was the most disgusting place you could imagine it was on the seafront on the corner of Dunwich Road and until recently it was called the something or other hotel and anyway we had booked a couple of weeks and when we went in the entrance and everything was absolutely filthy it was just awful. The bedrooms were grubby hadn't seen a duster or anything else for a long time anyway there wasn't any option at that stage.

When we thought we would have a drink in the residents' lounge before dinner it was full of people who were deep in conversation about whether or not people who had booked two weeks like we had and were getting to the end of the first week could stick another week. But we decided to press on and just make the most of it. Washing arrangements were the usual sort of jug and basin on the sideboard in the room and not a very clean jug or basin and it was all pretty awful. There was a comical twist to this because further up the Dunwich Road there was a guest house and my father was dispatched to have a sniff round to see what it looked like at close quarters. They might think about trying to fit us in and it was indeed the place that had had vacancies at four guineas a week. It was absolutely spotless, and we saw all these happy people coming and going from it and we sat in our resident's lounge that looked out on Dunwich Road and still does and we saw happy people in groups laughing their heads off. I thought Walberswick was the most boring place on earth. But anyway, that is how it turned out.

Q: So, they bought this house and moved here full time and your father fulfilled his ambition of being a professional artist. But he had your school fees to pay?

A: But the school fees were not as bad as they might have been because my father was obsessed with the idea, he was an Anglo Indian really, it was really important to him to get his son into an English public school and he set about finding the cheapest one in existence which he duly did and it was cheap because it was state aided. If you got your sprog into this school, you got free tuition and you just paid for the pleasure of the accommodation. I was only there for three years until I was sixteen and by that time my father had become very ill and this wasn't taking me where I wanted to go which was basically into the army.

Q: Was this when you started painting?

A: I suppose it was about when I started painting.

Q: Do you remember any of the famous artists who you would have been at Camberwell with or who taught at Camberwell, Craigie Aitchison?

A: Craigie Aitchison, he was there. It is surprising how many artists who weren't necessarily at the art school did live in Camberwell. There were one or two roads that were particularly attractive like Camberwell Grove for instance which Lesley and I lived in when we were first married, just a rented loft on the top of one of these Georgian terraces, beautiful places. We were there for a while; had a lot going for it really. The people who taught full time and part time were a very interesting cast of people, so we had a lot of very, very good contacts with the art world.

Q: Talking about the art world, do you remember Iris Birtwhistle?

A: Oh yes, it was Iris I wanted to draw your attention to because she was a highly controversial figure. She was a very dominant personality Iris. You had to just do it her way and she was very cavalier in her attitude to the neighbours in Millfield Road because of a lot of these people had visitors who needed a bit of overspill parking and tended to take up more space than Iris cared for and there was always some sort of business going on about parking issues.

Q: She discovered quite a few young artists, didn't she? Did she sell any of your paintings?

A: Yes, and also my sculptures and she got me some quite good commissions. You know you can't take it from her. She was a very forceful saleswoman and I always felt a little bit uncomfortable put it that way.

Q: Uncomfortable because she was a bit pushy?

A: Oh yes, whatever it was she was pushy all right. I don't know what Millfield Road is like now but in those days it was a very divided place with I suppose quite successful people who didn't like to be pushed around by this wretched woman who wanted to organise everything and there were lots of funny stories. My favourite story actually it is quite a naughty one. There was a kind of attitude

problem, a lot of people who lived in Millfield Road thought they were a bit better than the rest and then they were up against Iris who thought they were not a bit better than the rest. And the parking thing, she used to instruct her clients to park in their driveways and terrible troubles ensued and then, at a later date when Iris had moved on Millfield Road went back to being generally rather an exclusive place and you had to be a wee bit posh to live there and woe betide if you weren't a wee bit posh.



*Iris Birtwhistle - Richard's eccentric Walberswick patron*

## **Finally**

I would like to say a big "THANKS" to all the people who have helped me and guided me with these lockdown newsletters. In particular, I have relied heavily on Pat Lancaster, our archivist, Edward Wright, our membership secretary and Bill and Kay Ungless. They are always there to bounce ideas off and to check copy. They also write articles! During this lockdown phone and email have become so very important. Having people "around" you, even if they are 170 miles away has been so good.