



Walberswick

Local History Group

NEWSLETTER NO. 46

SEPTEMBER 2014

A note from the Archivist

Items received In view of the quantity of items donated to the History Group Archives, in future the Archivist will only advise the Committee of additional items. This information can be viewed on the full catalogue on the website.

Archives The Archivist has been temporarily housing the History Group Archives and wondered if anyone had any spare space, e.g. dry single garage or similar, in which these could be housed on a more permanent basis for the village. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated. [If you can help with this request in any way, please contact the Archivist, Pat Lancaster, with your suggestions. *Ed.*]

A note from the Editor

After the bumper edition of the newsletter in March, I have managed to contain myself this month to produce a more manageable size. I hope you will enjoy it and this it will interest, in spite of the slimming down that has occurred.

Helen Baxter

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 11 October 2014

‘The remarkable story of the Suffolk Punch horses
and their place in agricultural history’
Christopher Miller

Saturday 6 December 2014

Walberswick Archive Film from 1987 will be shown,
followed by a light buffet

All meetings commence at 19.30 in the village hall

EMMA LAST
MATRON OF BLYTHBURGH AND DISTRICT HOSPITAL
1947-1977

[Continued from Newsletter 45.]

Meals Breakfast 08.00 Cocoa 10.00, main meal 12.00, tea 16.00, soup or cocoa 19.00. Taken at bare scrubbed long tables with forms, men on one side women the other, only heating was a minute grate in the central wall heating only those fortunate enough to be sitting near it, broken brick floors and a draughty doorway to the outer passage, 4 other doors led to domestic dining room, male sitting room, sewing room, Matrons office and dispensary. Grace was said before and after meals, rather hurried and with dentures adorning the tables. The bell was tolled by the porter for all meals, Matrons office at 09.00 and for Chapel on Sundays at 16.30.

Rewards were Nellie Gemmell's letter. Loyal and wonderful staff. Love and confidence of patients.

Coronation year, following permission from the then house committee re celebration, obtained permission to take coach load of residents so able to visit London Zoo. Ensured my brood had pride of place to watch lions being fed, looked fondly round to ensure all could observe - voice (still recalled and could be named) 'look at that little owd sparrer Maton' owner of voice happily observing 'sparrer' eating food ignoring lions.

Residents Archer Punchard was totally blind and mute yet could always find his way to the toilet, dormitory and day room, a touch on the arm by colleagues told him when to go to the latter, showing kindness and consideration from the men.

Jo Bengier was the strawberry scarer.

Harry Pearce looked after the pigs and was so protective of them that when the Vet came and made the pigs squeal, Harry picked up a trough and hit the Vet with it.

Richard Grimmer was responsible for the swill that was fed to the pigs, this was kept in large tanks close to the pig sties.

I knowingly in 1947 at the age of 29 took charge of a slum of a workhouse of national ill repute and scandal and by sheer determination and hard work and staff leadership it now enjoys a good reputation as a leading Geriatric Hospital as evidenced by TV and Radio interviews, eminent visitors from England and abroad, and far more importantly good local opinion. Many trained staff now enjoying (and deserving) senior posts are 'Blythburgh trained'.

1967 The standard of nursing was so high that Consultant Geriatrician Dr. John Agate seconded a senior Sister from Blythburgh (Sister Newby) to set the standard at the new Amulree wing at Ipswich Hospital.

Food, always good though a tendency to overboil cabbage. Always home made cakes for tea, and cream buns on Sundays, birthday lists in the kitchen. Always an iced individual birthday cake to be placed on the table before resident who would cut same and share with friends.

I intensely disliked the term 'inmates', so impersonal, sick people or patients is preferable, Mr, Mrs or Miss to be used for all new patients in future, Christian names to be used only with permission.

Cinema shows on Saturday proved very popular.

29 October 1948 Opens fete at Blyburgate Hall, tribute paid to her for the work done at the then Red House Bulcamp. [Press cutting.]

1951 Each ward was covered by 2 Sisters and other trained staff. [Press cutting.]

July 1956 Spent every minute of my spare time picking blackcurrants and making them into jam every night until 10 or midnight, with the help of Sister Henrietta Kemp (over 800 lbs). [Photos.]

March 1969 Appointed to be the representative of the Matrons of Geriatric Hospitals.

Longest serving Matron in the group and possibly in the country appointed **July 1947**.

July 1972 Invited to garden party at Buckingham Palace.

Fought for minimum wage for the young members of staff who were not entitled to it until 21 years old.

BMJ 1987 Dear Sir, I am delighted to receive the cover of the *British Medical Journal* picturing Blythburgh and District Hospital. What nostalgia it evoked. I was Matron there from 1947-77 and saw its transformation from a condemned workhouse slum of national ill fame to a beautifully kept hospital where patients are lovingly cared for.

Dr John Agate has kindly sent me a copy of his excellent letter to you but I am saddened by the passage ----- publication of which I feel will cause hurt to many caring people who worked extremely hard. Especially I am thinking of the widows of former medical officers. I have written to Dr Agate expressing these sentiments and would like my written comments here to be just between you and me. I do hope I have not caused offence and that you will understand. Yours faithfully and most sincerely.

POTTERY REPORT 2014

Following a very successful session of test pit digging on April 30 and May 1 the pottery report is now in. It is interesting to note that there has been an increase in the number of different types of pottery found - 11 items were found last year but there were 15 this year, listed here:

- (RB) Roman 1st-mid-5th century AD
- (THET) Thetford ware 850-100 AD
- (EMW) Early medieval sandy ware 1100-1400 AD
- (HED) Hedingham ware late 12th-14th century
- (LMT) Late medieval ware 1400-1550
- (GS) German stoneware 1450 (and still made today)
- (GRE) Glazed red earthenwares 1550-1900
- (BW) Border ware 1550-1750
- (MB) Midland blackware 1550-1700
- (WCS) Cologne stoneware 1600 (and still made today)
- (TGE) Delft ware - first made in Norwich in 1600; around until 1900
- (SS) Staffordshire slipware 1640-1750
- (SMW) Staffordshire manganese ware late 17th-18th century
- (EST) English stoneware 1700-1900 (inn tankards, beer jugs, ink bottles etc.)
- (VIC) Victorian, first made around 1900

Eight teams of children dug nine pits in eight gardens:

- 1 Kermont
- 2 Threeways
- 3 Bell Inn
- 4 Poplar Cottage
- 5 Marshway
- 6 Sunset Cottage
- 7 Gorse View
- 8 Driftwood
- 9 Gorse View

I wish to thank the donors of their gardens, as this kindness helps to further the knowledge of the history of our village through the digging of test pits. I would also like to express thanks for the way in which looked after the children. I know that they did very much appreciate it and all had an enjoyable two days with us.

All the information will be on show and available at the History Group AGM in April 2015.

Philip Kett

BLACK SHUCK

[Continued from Newsletter 44.]

That Black Shuck is still very much a reality to Suffolk's marshland folk was shown by a remark of an aged Blythburgh resident who happened to be strolling by as I was on the point of entering the churchyard one autumn day in 1958. He found me engaged in reading the printed matter displayed on the notice-board, signed by the vicar and churchwardens:

'DOGS: Owing to regrettable accidents, we are obliged
to give notice that in no circumstances whatsoever
can dogs be allowed inside the church.'

The aged resident looked at me; I looked at the aged resident. Neither spoke. Yet I could see from his demeanour that he was anxious to say something.

'Well, now!' I began. 'What have you to say to *that*?'

My question afforded him the opportunity for which he was waiting. In his own, quaint, Suffolk dialect, he said that he knew I was a stranger to the place and that I mustn't be allowed to go away with a bad impression of Blythburgh's canine inhabitants. Blythburgh dogs, he was at pains to assure me, had a sense of fitness. Black Shuck, he declared, was responsible for the misconduct that had inspired this church notice.

'Ha! Bor! That warnt me own dawg, ne yit me neighbour's, what fouled the church,' he added. 'Telly for why. He larns our dawgs right-ways. Don't, we trosh the hide off on 'em.

'There eeain't a dawg, nit for miles round here, what 'ud goo in a charch. They knows their place too well.

'Thass owd Black Shuck - the owd Gallytrot we calls he - what goo in the charch an' cock his leg. He's the Davvel's own hound - big as a calf, black as night, and his owd optics glare like bike-lamps.

'If yew clap yar eyes on owd Shuck, you're a gonner, mate! One look at he, an' yar'll be in the bun-yard (churchyard).

'Thass a trew piece, bor! He'll hae ye, sure as harvest, if yew clap eyes on he, the owd muck!'

If Shuck has left his claw-marks on one of the doors of Blythburgh's Holy Trinity, the Devil himself is held to have *his* mark on another of its doors. The date of this sinister visitation is well established in history. It was the first Sunday in August, 1557.

During the reading of the Second Lesson that morning, there arose a terrific storm. It struck one side of the church with such violence that it 'drove all the people on that side of the church, above twenty persons, then renting the walls up to the Revestry, cleft the door, and returned to the Steeple, rent the timber, brake the chains, and fled towards Bungay'. In the meantime, a man and a boy had been killed,

while several others attending divine worship at Blythburgh that morning were scorched.

A contemporary account of what the Devil did at Blythburgh Church that fatal Sunday records that its spire was cast down and that it crashed through the west end of the roof, bringing with it the church's bells and the Jack o' the Clock. The Devil, as the marshland folks resolutely maintained, was clearly seen in the midst of the ensuing storm; and they declared, moreover, that, as he quitted the church, he scorched one of its smaller doors with the touch of his fiery hand.

Having wrought at Blythburgh the damage he intended, the Devil sped across the marshlands to Bungay - and with dire consequences of which one may also read in contemporaneous accounts. Through the church rushed the Black Dog, or 'the divel in suche likeness', smiting worshippers where they knelt and gripping one of them by the back with a hand so powerful that his victim contracted and curled up like a fragmenet of letter thrown on a fire. On the church door at Bungay, too, the Black Dog left, on this occasion, scratchings still to be seen there.

Among the more recent accounts of the Devil's having been encountered in these parts is that concerning a Southwold fisherman who, when returning home about midnight, suddenly heard behind him the rattle of shingle, as of somebody following him. He turned round to observe, close behind him, the figure of a stranger 'dressed in black, like a gentleman'.

More recent still is the account I had the other day from Dr. H. G. Collings of the Ghana Museum and Monuments Board. Dr. Collings, a veritable mine of information, was Medical Officer at Southwold from 1914 until 1946. Writing to me from Accra, he reminded me of Walberswick's heath-horse. Although he himself has never seen this cantering phantom, its existence is firmly set in local belief. It is said to emerge from one of the ancient barrows by the Heronry, not far from the farmhouse on the Blythburgh road. He also reminded me of the occasion upon which the late Henry Smith, a well-known Southwold fisherman, met the Devil on the shingle not far from the local rifle-butts. 'He was dressed in black,' Henry declared; 'and he smelt of brimstone.'

After one has lived and moved awhile among Suffolk's marshland and fisherfolk, such accounts as these would seem to place little strain upon one's credulity. Who would question Jack List, the gamekeeper, for example? Jack, who lives in a cottage near Westwood Lodge, declares that his father saw, *outside* that old manor, the ghost whose footsteps are heard *inside*. One day Jack's father tried to shoot this disturbing intruder. According to Jack, he would have succeeded in doing so, had not his gun jammed at the critical moment!

THOUGHTS OF AN OWD SUFFOLK COUNTRYMAN

[From the *East Anglian Magazine*, February, 1950. By A. O. D. Claxton with drawings by Bernard Reynolds.]

Eint it a rum un how so many o' the young fellers nowadays fare t'want t'leave the country parts an' go up t' the smoke. Happen they think they'll find the streets o' Lunnon paved wi' gowd, but when they git there they sune find out their mistake.

Oi reckon when they git t' bed at night arter climbin' up about 70 stairs t' git t' their room they sometimes lay awake an' think o' some o' the luvly things they've left ahind 'em.

There may be some fine sights in Lunnon but will they see anything t' come up t' the pitcher o' the seagulls a-followin' the plough, the full mune a-castin' the shadder o' the trees in the lane, the 'owd windmill a-workin' on the common, the little chutch a-nestlin' in the trees, the cows a-restin' under t' owd oak on a hot summer's day, the little river a-runnin' threw the midder covered wi' buttercups, or the sky on a clear frorsty night? Oi wonder when they look out o' their bedroom winder fust thing of a mornin' an see a lot o' dutty owd housen wi' their chimbleys a-smokin' t' other side o' the rood, 'haps they mind what a grand sight ta be down in Suffolk on t' see "Owd Phoebe" a-peepin' over the skyline an' a-shinin' threw the tall row o' poplars standin' up like a lot of sowdgers. Ah, bor, tha's a sight for sore eyes. If owd Phoebe be a-showin' red th' hossman 'ud know twuz goin' t' rain coz there's a sayin' "Red sky in the mornin' is a shipherd's warnin'."

Then agin when there's a bit o' a shower on a sunny day dew they see the luvly rainbow a-stretchin' acrorst the sky an' paintin' Farmer Giles' stacks wi' the colours far better than o' 'em 'air artist fellers can dew. No, all they see is a slimy muck in the roods lookin' suffin like the colours o' the rainbow, but tha's only the dutty ile from the shinkin' owd motor buses.

Oi wonder when they hare 'em owd starlin's perked around St. Martin's in the Fields, a-chatterin' an' a-squakin' whether their thoughts tarn t' some of the buds they used t' hare in the filds an' woods in the country. Dew they mind the trills o' the nightingale in the bushes in the spinney near owd Garge's barn, the storm-cock a-bustin' his throat a-settin' on top o' the highest tree when the wind is a-blowin' like the davel, the mavis a-singin' in the spring, the cheeky robin a-pipin' away in th' own apple tree jest above their hids when they were a-diggin' in the garden, the chaffinch's "spink-spink", the backbird's whistle, the little doddy jinny wrens' twitterin', or the lark's song a-comin' out o' the sky. Why even the starlin's don't make the duzzy row they dew in Lunnon - they jest mimic other birds that can sing.

They tell you about th' owd dows in Trafalgar Square bein' so tame that fooks feed 'em out o' their hands. Somehow Oi fancy they sometimes wish they could be a-

layin' up in a dyke under the owd ellow tree wi' a double-barrelled gun a-waitin' t' git a shot at the dows comin arter Farmer Giles' pays in the fild alongside the copse. 'Haps they mind the time when th' owd cock pheasant went a-rockettin' over a-callin' "Yew dusn't shoot me, yew'll git pulled if yew dew."

If they hev a dorg in Lunnon they hev t' tek him for a walk on th' ind o' a bit o' string. Oi bet they miss takin' th' owd bitch round the filds an' hedges of a Saturday arfternoon an' bringin' hoom a rabbit for Sunday dinner.

What dew they feel like in the spring lookin' at nawthen' but housen an' shops, housen an' shops, wi' a few owd plane trees here an' there. Dew they hanker arter the sight o' the silver barch a-comin' inter leaf, the fust green o' the larch, the buds a-breakin' on th' ellowms, oaks and ashes or the chestnut openin' her fingers.

Haysel an' harvest may mean hard work an' long hours but what about that chunk o' bread an' cheese an' a pint for elevenses, or the drink o' tea an' a grut owd bit o' missus cake for four ses when yew're sittin' in the sun. Dew they think o' these when a-strugglin' for a "hot-dorg" or a cup o' tea in a "snack bar".

Oi've hard o' black snow but till Oi went up t' Lunnon Oi wouldn't believe there wuz such a thing. 'Haps that make 'em pitcher the wide open filds an' heaths all a-covered wi' a white blanket, and the trees all a-glistenin' in the sunlight. Oi reckon they don't think the street lamps a-shinin' on the slushy muck in the streets look half as pretty.

Cors Oi know they say "Yew fooks in the country live in sich bad conditions." Well, we eint got all or even half what us should like tew hev, but yew'd be wholly stammed t' know what we can git used tew. Oi once hard an owd chap, tarded 80, whew'd bin a-drinkin' pond water all his life say about tap water, "Oi don't like the stuff. That don't fare t' a-got any body in it."

At any rate we have got plenty o' room t' move arter we git out abroad, an' don't keep a-blunderin' up agin the next pussen ivry time we go on the rood; and we dew have suffen different t' look at ommust evry day - the trees, the hedges an' the flowers are allus changin', niver the same, an' we know 'em all.

Dew yew know, Oi niver fare t' breathe God's fresh air when Oi'm in Lunnon in the winter-time - nawthen but smoke an' fog an stinkin' petrol fumes.

Howsomiver 'teint any good an' owd fule like me a-tryin' t' tell the young uns where they should arn their bit o' bread an' cheese, but Oi dew hope they come an' hev a look at th' owd country sometimes.

[*Note from the Editor*: There is a note under this article that talks about the end of rationing of paper to periodicals on 1 March 1950, so 'we shall now be able to print all the copies we require'. The Second World War had ended nearly five years earlier!]
