

WELLS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 19 - DECEMBER 2001



**YOUR COMMITTEE WISH ALL MEMBERS
A HAPPY CHRISTMAS
AND A SUCCESSFUL NEW YEAR**



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Following the enrolment of members at our first monthly meeting in September we have already reached over 100. This figure includes postal applications from new members who requested forms at the summer events which included Harbour Day and the Buttlands carnival. It is hoped to see membership reach 150 this season.

At a recent committee meeting it was decided to purchase filmed copies of "The Wells Herald" held by the British Library. This paper was published in the years around 1880, and although some copies do exist in the town the British Library had issues that have not yet been seen. It is hoped that the film will be available for members to study on our reader in November.

The question of purchasing early issues of the Norfolk Chronicle was discussed by the committee but it was thought that the Wells content would not justify the cost at this stage. I am trying to go through the early copies in the county archive, but as well as being time consuming this is very hard on the eyes. I will submit some of the extracts from these early papers to our editor who may use them to fill gaps in editions of newsletters in the future.

Wells was in the news during October with several articles about the murder of 1817. This was an event that I have studied closely and as a result Tom Sands and myself were able to provide the media and Gressenhall with the correct details. Unfortunately both Tom and I missed the TV piece that Calendar filmed on the subject which included interviews and shots around the places where the event took place. Does anyone have a copy of the

programme? I will be talking about the murder at the January meeting.

Members of the committee are looking forward to getting a copy of the 1901 census when it becomes available in January. Large numbers of enquiries are being received from people outside the town researching their family history, and we have been able to help them. Unfortunately not many requests have been received from Wells residents so far, probably for the reason that so many people living in the town have come in from other areas.

Mike Welland

Times Past

Clock & Watch Tax - A tax was levied on the possession of clocks and watches from 1797.

Dog Tax - The possession of dogs was taxed from 1796 until 1882.

Hair Powder - Duty was levied from 1795 to 1798 on all people using hair powder. A licence had also to be obtained.

Horses and Racehorses - People in possession of horses or racehorses were taxed between 1784 and 1874.

Servants Tax - From 1785-92 a tax was levied on households employing female servants. Between 1777 and 1852 a tax was levied on households employing male servants.

Window Tax - This tax was imposed in 1696 to replace the Hearth Tax. Each household paid a basic two shillings for their windows. For those with between ten and twenty windows an extra eight shillings was payable. A new Act of 1747 changed the tax to six pence a window for

households with between ten and fourteen windows on top of the basic two shillings. Those with between fifteen and twenty windows paid nine pence a window, and over twenty windows the tax was one shilling per window. From 1825 houses with less than eight windows were exempt from the tax, but it was not abolished until 1851.

House Duty - To replace the Window Tax a new tax was levied on inhabited houses from 1851 to 1924.

Registration Tax - In 1783 a three pence tax was placed on all entries in parish registers, Burials, Marriages and Baptisms. The tax resulted in an immediate fall in entries. After the first year the Rector of Wells wrote in the parish register that the number of Baptisms had dropped below the lowest number for over thirty years. The tax was repealed in 1794.

October 2nd 1783

On the second of October 1783 the Act imposing a Tax of three-pence upon Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials took place, by which the Register Books are made subject to the Inspection of the Commissioners of the Stamp-duties or to any Person appointed by them, and the above Tax is to be collected & paid to the person so appointed by the Ministers of the several Parishes whenever demanded : a Licence being first obtained from the said Commissioners for entering such Baptisms, Marriages and Burials in church Registers

At the end of 1784 the Rector noted the following in the Register -

Baptised Males 30 Females 19

Remark: The Baptisms in the last 30 years amount (on an average) to seventy three yearly, and 61 is the least number, so that in 1784 they fall 24 below the average number and 12 below the least and that in time of

Peace

J. Robinson, Rector

THE FLEECE INN WELLS

WILLIAM BUSHELL having succeeded Mr Faux, the late tenant, takes this Opportunity to inform his Friends and the Public in general that having fitting up the above Inn with Beds, and laid in a good Assortment of Wines and other Liquors, with every Accommodation, hope for the Continuance of the Gentleman and Ladies, and all others who confer their Favours, may depend on every Endeavour to give Satisfaction from Their obliged and very humble servant.

WM. BUSHELL

Extract from the *Norfolk Chronicle* October 11th, 1777.

Wells next the Sea August 21, 1776 STOLEN OR STRAYED

From Wells next the Sea in the County of Norfolk on Tuesday Night the 13th inst.

An aged BROWN MARE with a switch tail, hanging Mane on her near side, a white Ring on the off foot behind, a low back, very bad Mouth, and is remarkably grey in her face with Age.

Whoever will bring the said Mare or give Intelligence so that she may be had again to Mr Francis Spooner at Wells next the Sea aforesaid, Mr Mendham of Briston in the said County, or Mr Caleb Godfrey at the Moon and Stars in St Michaels Norwich, shall be handsomely rewarded for their Trouble.

Extract from the *Norfolk Chronicle* August 24th 1776.

SUNFIRE OFFICE

MR THOMAS JONES Merchant of Wells is duly authorised to receive the annual payments for Insurances already made in the said Office; and persons desirous of insuring their Houses, Buildings, Goods, Wares, or Merchandise from Loss or Damage by Fire in this Office, may by applying to him have Policies made out with utmost Expedition and Punctuality.

Printed Proposals Gratis
Insurances on Ships and Merchandise by

sea are also made at his Office in Wells. He begs leave to return Thanks to those Friends who have favoured him with their Custom in the Coal Trade, and to inform them and the Public in general, that he deals likewise in the following articles; Cinders, English and Dutch Pantiles, Flag Stones and Bottles with which they may be supplied, and their Favours gratefully acknowledged.

Extract from the Norfolk Chronicle November 2nd 1776

On Saturday last Thomas Manclark, convicted last Easter Session of stealing one large bundle of long yarn, the property of Messrs Harvey and Alric, was pursuant to his sentence publicly whipped round the market by the common hangman. The ignominy of his punishment chiefly consisted of his being exposed in so shameful a manner.

The whipping which was intended to be more severe was defeated by the executioner being so far intoxicated as to be incapable of putting that part of the sentence in execution with any sense of propriety; for which offence he was by the Magistrates convicted of drunkenness and fined 5s. for the same, and then discharged from his office of public executioner and collector for the prisoners.

Extract from the Norfolk Chronicle August 10th 1776.

**To be SOLD by AUCTION
By WILLIAM CUSTANCE of FAKENHAM**

On Wednesday 7th July at the Sign of the Standard at Wells between one and three o'clock in the afternoon FOUR TENEMENTS in good Repair in Wells aforesaid, and one Acre of Land. In the several occupations of William Straycock, Thomas Mindham, Peter Wilson, William Swan and George Cooke. Part Copyhold and part Freehold.

Extract from the Norwich Chronicle of June 22nd 1776.

A DILIGENCE

From Norwich to Wells in Norfolk, near Holkham Hall, the Seat of the Hon. Thomas William Coke Esq. To carry three passengers, sets out from the Angel Inn in the Market Place, Norwich on Monday 30th March 1778, by way of Lenwade Bridge, Fakenham and Walsingham, and will continue every Monday and Thursday morning at Five o'clock and return the same evening. Each

Passenger is allowed seven pounds weight of Luggage, all above to pay one Halfpenny per Pound. The proprietors will not be accountable for parcels of value unless insured and paid for as such. Each Passenger to pay Three pence per mile.

Performed by Robt. Lewis Norwich

Rich. Cantrell Lenwade Bridge
Wm. Burton Fakenham

Extracted from the Norfolk Chronicle March 7th 1778.

Wednesday, committed to the Castle by George Chadd Esq. Margaret Greenacre of Wells, an old offender, charged with stealing from out of the dwelling-house of Katherine Balders, wearing apparel & etc the property of Susannah Tooley of Wells aforesaid.

Extracted from the Norfolk Chronicle May 23rd 1778

In the storm of Sunday last, the "Good Intent", belonging to Wells, bound from Rotterdam to Lynn was drove onshore at Brancaster and immediately - went to pieces: The crew were saved and part of the cargo.

Extracted from the Norfolk Chronicle of Saturday October 3rd 1778.

Archives

The Group has received several items for its archives and a system is now in place for recording and describing items which is compatible with that of the Maritime Museum. Some acknowledgment letters have gone out and some are in the "pending" tray. apologies to those anticipating.

It was hoped that the deposited items could be listed in this Newsletter. Perhaps in issue No. 23. The system will be activated within weeks not months!

D. A. Perryman

Warham Camp

We are grateful to Mrs. Eva Hinson of Park Road who has passed on to us for safe keeping some material relating to Warham (still referred to locally as "Danish") Camp. It consists of copies of two papers, made by the Norwich Central Library in 1979, and sent to an H.J. Brown, then of Bury St. Edmunds. He was born in Wighton, and after moving to Bury maintained an interest in this area, and his widow gave the papers to Mrs. Hinson.

There are copies of:

1. An article in the Antiquaries Journal (xiii, 1933, pages 399-413) by H. St. George Gray, reporting his survey and excavations started in 1914 but not continued until 1929. He concluded that (a) the large amount of Roman, and some earlier, pottery found proved that the earthworks dated from long before the DANES arrived, and (b) the gateway on the north side is modern and the only ancient entrance was from the river, and there had never been banks or ditches at that point (it is still being suggested by others that there had been, but that the Turners had them leveled off when they occupied the manor house to the north).

2. Pages 46-53 of an article in the Archaeological Journal, Vol 96, 1939, entitled "The Iron Age in Norfolk & Suffolk", author not recorded. This does not query Gray's conclusions and speculates that the Camp was constructed between 50 B.C. and the early years of the first century A.D., and that it may have been built to counter a threat via the sea from the hostile folk from Essex!

The original publications can presumably still be consulted in Norwich or elsewhere, but is good to have the information here in Wells, where the impressive earthworks are held in great affection through family picnics and the like.

Brian Scott

Meetings Comment

I have very little knowledge of railways apart from knowing that I like the shape of modern locomotives. My knowledge of Norfolk does not extend back to



the days of a network of rails throughout the County. Therefore having finally sat down to listen to Adrian Vaughan there seemed only a remote chance that I would be gripped with enthusiasm. I listened, and heard words that had meaning.

I watched, and saw pictures of places that I recognised. I made notes and gradually became aware that not only did I understand, but that I was waiting for the next piece of information.

I can't say that I am now an authority on the railways of North Norfolk, but I'd love to listen to Adrian again, to learn more.

The following week, in the town, I heard a number of similar thoughts expressed. It just goes to show that often a subject is only as interesting as the speaker will allow. Well done Adrian!

Maureen Whiddett

EDITOR'S SOAP BOX

I was beginning to despair that material for this Newsletter would not be forthcoming. Mike Welland has, again, come to the rescue. In Newsletter 17 I suggested that the Newsletter would need to re-invent itself. I believe that time has now arrived. If I am right the April and September editions would be in the form of "news briefings" with all articles saved for a bumper December edition.

I have come to this conclusion because of repeated requests for articles, titbits or comment few have responded. Your comment on this is welcomed.

Again, I have requested comment on the use of higher quality but slightly more expensive copying of the Newsletter. None was received so I will carry on with the high quality production.

Jean Terrington would, as you have been informed, prefer all material as a Word document or rich text file (.rtf) either on a disc or as an e-mail attachment. These can be sent to me via hampden.house@virgin.net.

Copy for the April Newsletter (or News Briefing) must be in my hands by 28th February 2002.

Happy Festive Season to you all.

D. A. Perryman