

WELLS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 25 - DECEMBER 2003



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



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

I was advised by the Editor this morning, 30th October that tomorrow is the deadline for items for this newsletter. How time flies. Now I have to think about what to write. Our first meeting was well attended and several people came along for the first time and signed up for membership.

This week Chris, the manager of *The Crown*, lent me a copy of an indenture dated 1790 which he had been unable to interpret. This turned out to be exciting as it covered a sale by Baron Hibgauer of Norfolk, to John Webber the schoolmaster, of the land on which the hotel was subsequently built. The measurements of the land shown on the deed turned out to be exactly that of the front portion of the hotel itself, which was built some 40 years later when it was added on to the front of the old school. This document added to the information already known about the Buttlands and *The Crown*, and again illustrates how one has to change ideas about history as new information comes to light.

I have also been working on the story of James Alexander Davidson, the onetime owner of *The Edinburgh*, *The Crown*, and *The Fleece*, together with other businesses. This research originated after I received a letter from James Alexander John Davidson, grandson of the Wells merchant. It had been thought that James Alexander had moved to Wells from Scotland, thus the origin of the name change when he bought the public house then known as the Leicester Arms. In actual fact my research found that James Alexander was born in Holkham, son of one of Lord Leicester's gamekeepers, and he had been christened at the Congregational

Church in Wells. His grandson has taken out membership of the W.L.H.G., and we hope to meet him and his family at a subsequent meeting.

Caroline Alexander, the American historian, has just had her latest book released "*The Bounty The true story of the Mutiny of the Bounty*". This book is a great read, almost 500 pages long, and following extensive research by Caroline, casts new light on the events that occurred before, during, and after the event. I was on a number of occasions in contact with the author about John Fryer's background and his involvement in the mutiny, and she was kind enough to give me several credits in the book. Please may I ask all members once again, to remember that we will need new officers for the Group from next season. Volunteers or suggestions please.

Mike Welland

Times Past

NOTES ON SOME OF THE MASTER MARINERS BURIED IN WELLS CHURCHYARD

Flaxman W.W.

b. Wells 1829

Master's Certificate No. C88094 issued at Sunderland 1871.

Ships listed *British Queen* 1871

Coral Queen 1871-3

Kew, James

b. Wells, 1810

Master's Certificate No. S42697

Ships listed

Ocean Cloud (5272) 1855-7

Formosa (20189) 1858

Latimer (23109) 1858-60

Crest of the Wave(6353) 1861-68

Harman, James William (also listed as J.W. Harman)

b. Wells 1829

Master's Certificate No. C939 issued at London 1857

Ships listed *Thracian* 1857-58
Saitars 1858-60
Alchymist 1860-64
Madagascar 1864
Coimbutore 1866-73 (In East Indies and Australia trade.)

Note: In general it can be said that prior to 1845 no certification was necessary in order to act in the capacity of either master or mate of a British merchant vessel. However, there were exceptions to this general state of affairs. Some captains would have taken pilotage certificates of the Corporation of Trinity House in London in order to avoid the necessity of employing (and therefore having to pay for) a pilot on the River Thames and on adjacent waterways and coasts extending from Felixstowe to the Medway. Hull Trinity House took that a stage farther in the late 1700s when they made it a rule that all master mariners sailing on ships registered at Hull were required to hold a certificate of proficiency granted by Hull Trinity after the candidate had served an apprenticeship to one of its members. (This is an early example of the 'closed shop'.)

Then in 1845 the Board of Trade introduced a system' of *voluntary* examinations for prospective masters and mates of foreign-going vessels. These were made compulsory by the Mercantile Marine Act of 1850 with effect from 1851, and were extended to those serving in the home trade by the Merchant Shipping Act of 1854. Those who sat for and passed an examination were issued with a Certificate of Competency in the grade for which they had been examined. When compulsory examinations were introduced, provision was made for Certificates of Service (as opposed to Certificates of Competency), in the appropriate capacity to be issued without examination to men who had served as masters or mates of British merchant vessels before January 1st 1851 and to officers of the Royal Navy who wished to serve on merchant vessels and to officers of the East India Company ships. (This, basically, is the

same system as prevails to this day.)

The number of a Certificate of Competency was prefixed by the letter 'C' and for a Certificate of Service by the letter 'S'.

Thus **James Kew** above held a Master's Certificate of Service. This means that he had been in command of a merchant vessel prior to 1851, although the earliest ship recorded against his name at Lloyds is the *Ocean Cloud* in 1855.

***Researched by Captain Peter Elphick,
October 2003***

THE PORT OF WELLS IN THE 16th CENTURY

I recently received from David Jarman, a member from Surrey, an abstract from Dr C M Fraser's transcription of the Chamberlain's accounts 1508-1511.

It gives details of sea trade between Newcastle upon Tyne and the Port of Wells. The masters named are: Bettyl, Brig/Briggs/Brygg, Fuller, Manser/Mansser, Pinsett/Pinzett, Sabbe/Salle and Tyd/Tydd. The names of their vessels are listed together with dates and cargo carried. Cargoes to Newcastle included barley, rye, wheat, malt, herrings and meslin (sic). Coal was the only cargo listed as coming into Wells.

Our thanks go to David for giving this interesting information to the Group.

Many thanks to those who gave helpful suggestions on the whereabouts of the "clicker". As soon as the newsletter was distributed, it was found; about six feet from where I write this confession. That's someone's law isn't it.

Maureen Whiddett

The Book of Wells

A small group has met to progress this project and possibly members will have been updated at the November meeting. If not it will be at the December meeting.

D. A. Perryman

Young Historians

Gifted & Talented Summer School 2003

The Gifted & Talented Summer School was held as a joint venture between the Alderman Peel High School and Fakenham High School over the summer holidays. As part of the summer school, Alderman Peel ran academies on History and Drama, whilst Fakenham concentrated on Sport and Science.

The main focus of the two-day History academy was 'Local History,' and was based at the Alderman Peel site. This involved fifteen students aged 11 to 14, who were already students at one of the high schools, or will be starting this September.

On the first day Tuesday 29th July we went to Norwich, visiting Origins at the Forum in the morning and the Castle Museum in the afternoon. Both centres particularly Origins - had a great range of interactive features, which made the information really accessible and interesting for students. We ate our packed lunches on Castle Green, which meant we could enjoy the sun, and purchase drinks and lollies from the coffee shop there.

For the second day of the academy, students were working on their own local history projects in school, and for this I appealed to the members of Wells Local History Group for any help they could provide. Fortunately, my plea was answered, and we were joined by Maureen and Terry Whiddett, and Cynthia Jackson, who is also the Alderman Peel school librarian. Between them, they provided plenty of resources as well as imparting their valuable knowledge. Several local history books were borrowed from Wells library for the students to use, and they were given a list of useful website addresses. Topics of interest included Norfolk myths, Norwich City Football Club, John Fryer, Henry Blogg, Trade and Industry in Wells, Horatio Nelson and Norfolk artists. Projects were produced in the form of newspaper reports, leaflets, posters, and some rather impressive powerpoint presentations. Just before lunch, we were also treated to an hour-long historical tour of Wells by Terry Whiddett, which was both interesting and helpful for projects and personal interest.

At the end of the day, prizes were presented to Fiona Farrow and Hannah Tuck of APHS and Steven Girling, Emily Foster and Briony Young of FHS for the hard work they put in. (Prizes were a choice between a z-ball and a hula hoop)

Emma Perchard

Gifted & Talented Co-ordinator

Archives

Mrs Dawn Allen-Crow of Wisbech has been in touch with us asking if anybody has any information and in particular a photo. of her grandfather Frederick George Hubbard.

He was an engine driver on the railway and retired in 1948. He lived near Jolly Sailors Yard and then later in Northfield Avenue. His wife, who had a walking problem, used to drive around the town in a pony and trap, later in an electric wheelchair. There were three children, Joan who is Mrs Allen-Crow's mother, Stanley and May.

Mr Hubbard had two particular friends. One was the father of a Peggy Howell, the other was a Mr Haywood with whom he sailed.

If anybody has any information, will they please get in touch with Mrs Allen-Crow on 01945 475367 e-mail dawn@cyrilla.fsnet.co.uk or with us on 710924. (We would like any photos for the COMMA archive)

John and Alison Christmas

COMMA update

The equipment which we use to produce the community archive is now several years old. Since first introducing the COMMA package, improvements have been made in the light of users' experience. Most of the other groups setting up an archive are using the newer, more flexible system which they have bought after obtaining a grant from 'Awards forAll'.

A new system would also enable the archive to be put on the Web as part of a Norfolk Archive. The History Group has therefore decided to apply for such a grant. If we are successful we shall buy a lap-top computer, a projector and a screen. This will enable us to give

EDITOR'S SOAP BOX

Presentations in various locations e.g. Heritage House, the schools, and other venues for the public. It will also enable us to visit people in their own homes to collect material for archiving if they are unable to come to our drop-in sessions in the library.

We have several hundred photos on record now but are still looking for more. Do you have any we might use?

John and Alison. Christmas 710924

Copy for the April 2004 Newsletter must be in my hands by **February 28th**.

From myself and Jean Terrington (the Newsletter team) best wishes to you all, for a Happy Christmas and a healthy and successful 2004.

D. A. Perryman

Visit to NORFOLK RECORD OFFICE

Wednesday February 11th

The new Archive Centre opened on November 3rd

Our visit would include use of the Green Room for a talk about the work of the Record Office, a display of original documents which we could select in advance, and a tour of the public and 'behind-the-scenes' areas.

Cost to cover coach would be approximately £6 to £10 depending on numbers.

If you are interested please contact Mike Welland - 710080

**Just a plate of COCKLES
From Bright Breezy Bracing WELLS**



Don't you wish you were here?