

WELLS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

MEMBERS NEWSLETTER No. 26 - APRIL 2004

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

By the time you read this we will be nearing the end of another season of our Group. Meetings have been well attended and speakers well received. I expect to be Speaker Finder again for next season. As each year passes it becomes harder to think of new subjects and speakers. I like to try and engage speakers that can include Wells in their subject matter as I feel that is what members want. However, there are exceptions as with the January talk by Joe Ellison on his years with Time Team, a talk enjoyed by all who were there, that I have since spoken to. It is your ideas that I want, and if anyone has suggestion to make please let me have them.

I am writing these notes on 22nd January after attending a WLHG Committee meeting. John Christmas demonstrated the new Comma equipment to us, purchased through a grant he was successful in negotiating. This equipment really is state of the art and will be a great asset to the group, and to the town, in being able to retain so much information in the way of photographs, documents, recorded tapes etc. This information will be available to all who wish to view or listen to it, and John and Alison have made huge efforts on behalf of the group to gather photographs, and make recordings of people's memories.

Also discussed at our committee meeting was the progress of the book on Wells, which is getting towards the contract signing stage. As most of you are aware David Perryman is steering the project, with a very able team of helpers, however, he does need more contributors and anyone who thinks they can help in this way will be very welcome. One of the team, Guy Warren, has designed a new logo for our group, and I hope this will be at the head of the newsletter when it is produced.

We have three new volunteers for nomination to the committee, which is very satisfying, but we still need a Secretary for next season.

Anyone who feels they can take on the duties of secretary for the WLHG can be assured that they will receive every help from the rest of the committee.

It has been decided that we will not have a Summer Programme this year. While the Committee realise that some people may be disappointed it was felt that those of us who had prepared the displays for the past few years needed a break, at least for one year. The commitment to take on these events has to be taken early and it was felt that it was necessary to take the decision now.

I apologise for the change of date for the AGM in April. I have arranged an overseas trip which will take several of the committee away on the original date set, and I take full responsibility for the problems caused. I hope that your next Chairman will be far better organised.

Mike Welland

Times Past

The Crown Hotel

I have just completed extensive research on documentation relevant to the hotel, and to surrounding land and properties. This project was already underway when the documentation was found recently in a cardboard box in the hotel cellars, while the manager was searching for Christmas decorations. What a find it turned out to be with documentation going back in time to 1723. The book I have now compiled is quite extensive, but I will try and precise some of the more important events in the life of the building.

From the start it is important to think of the Crown as a building in two parts, the old rear portion comprising what is now the reception area and back bar, and the later front added around 1825 at the time the larger houses along the west side of the Buttlands were erected.

Firstly, the early records reveal that the rear portion of the present building was a row of three cottages, sold in 1724 by a Henry Day to Ann Thurton. One of these cottages was complete with a brewhouse with its copper and other brewing utensils. Turnstile Lane ran on the east side, the Buttlands to the north, but nothing but open ground known as Burrow Pits to the west and the property we now know as Ostrich House to the south. The copyhold fee paid to the Manor of Wells amounted to one halfpenny per annum.

There were several changes of ownership and occupancy of the cottages until an important change in 1790, when the schoolmaster John Webber purchased the cottages from the then owner Bacon Hibgame. At the same time as buying the cottages he purchased a freehold piece of ground 22 yards by five yards in front of the cottages which adjoined the Buttlands. This land was to become the garden and shrubbery in front of his school.

Webber at once converted the cottages to a boarding school, living at the time in what is now Ostrich House and owning the land "between them. The latter house was purchased by Samuel Ellis who converted it into the *Ostrich Inn*. It was Samuel Ellis who bought Webber's school in 1824 for £340. The particulars of the sale read in part " the lower part has for many years as a Schoolroom, and the upper part as sleeping rooms for the boarders, but the same may at a small expense again be converted into a dwellinghouse." Samuel Ellis also bought the garden land in front of the school in a separate transaction, and it was on this piece of land that he built the front part of *The Crown Hotel*.

Prior to the discovery of the Crown deeds it was thought that the hotel opened about 1830. It would now appear that it could have been nearer 1825, which means a further trawl through newspapers of that time, to try and clarify an exact opening date.

There was no access to the hotel rear from the Buttlands in the early days, and this must have made it difficult for stabling horses etc. The answer was to gain access from Burnt Street, and this was the reason the road was put through to the rear of *The Crown* in 1836. Some additional land had to be purchased by

Samuel Ellis before the road could be laid, and there is a plan of this land with the line of the proposed road drawn in pencil. The land included the ground on which the W.I. Hall and the Youth Hostel now stand, on which previously stood a barn and stables. If you walk past the Youth Hostel along Church Plain the outline of the barn can be clearly seen on the first cottage. The road to *The Crown* was called New Road, and it appears with this name on census documents of the time.

The hotel grounds included a large bowling green and skittle alley, and extensive gardens, which extended to Plummers Hill to the west. Just to the north of *The Ostrich* ran a stream or watercourse, which crossed Church Plain and ran into the marsh. This stream was used by residents of the New Road cottages for their water supply.

Ownership of *The Crown* remained with the descendants of Samuel Ellis until 1894 when his grand daughter, Ann Glazebrook, sold the establishment to James Alexander Davidson, owner of the *Edinburgh*.

The above notes are only the briefest sketch of the details that the documents contained. There were also a number of items referring to *Ostrich House*, *The Edinburgh*, and surrounding land and property, which helped us to understand how the whole area developed.

I am extremely grateful to Chris Courbrough, Manager of the hotel, for making these deeds available for my research

Mike Welland

Extract from a Daily Telegraph article Entitled "Nelson's Land, 16th August 1890

The train stops short at the village terminus of Wells-by-the-Sea. This is a seaside village as yet unspoiled. Visitors there are who do not mind a tramp to the beach from the primitive hamlet, but they do not require the attractions of niggers, or piers or local bands. The streets of Wells are as quiet and humble as those at Clovelly, and there is a charming little village inn with a fruit garden and an old bowling green, facing an old fashioned village-green. The landlady, whose family have owned the

hostelry for centuries, is in despair when she presents me with the visitors book, for it appears she has been recently entertaining literary giants unawares. "Why didn't they tell me who they were?" says the excellent hostess as she points to well known names, "Though if they had" she added pathetically, "I could not have treated them better than I did. It is plain fare, sir, at the Crown, but homely". And to all of this I can testify, having lunched off a home made rabbit-pie and Norfolk ale, after which I was prepared to endorse the eulogium of a London governess and her companion, who could not leave Wells and return to work again without contributing a paean in verse to the visitors book, of course in praise of the inn, the cooking, the beds, the landlady, and the fair-haired Abigail. The old inn at Wells may be romantic, but it is not so old fashioned as to boast a posting establishment a matter of necessity for one who wanted to get on to Burnham Thorpe. So I put myself in charge of the juvenile "boots" of the old world inn on the village green, and he in turn conducted me to the shop of a sporting saddler, very learned in horseflesh, who boasted a fast trotting mare capable of doing any distance in any given time, and in less than no time the mare was put into a smart gig, and we were bowling away in the direction of Lord Leicester's beautiful park at Holkham which lies between Wells by the Sea and Burnham Thorpe.

Mike Welland

Archives

**WHAT A MUSICAL BUNCH WE WERE,
BUT OH! HOW THE LANGUAGE HAS
CHANGED!**

**CUTTINGS FROM A COLLECTION
DONATED BY N.W.B. & J.M. GREEN**

Nov 1904 WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA

The annual concert in aid of funds of the Wells Town Band was given in the New Hall on Wednesday under the conductorship of Mr. Frederick Brightmer. A large audience showed their appreciation of the best programme the band has yet put before a Wells audience. The music was admirably rendered, and special mention should be made of the descriptive fantasia "From Dawn to Twilight," morceau "A Night in Switzerland," and Handel's

"Hallelujah Chorus," the last named being especially well given. The quartet "O, dry those tears" received a well-merited encore. Mr. G. E. Dewing again won favour with his song "For Home and Glory," which was redemanded. Mrs. Beesley and Mrs. F. Brighmer sang with great taste. Special mention must be made of Miss Dolly Brightmer's sleigh bell solos, which were exceedingly well given, and encored.

28.04.1904 AMATEUR THEATRICALS AT WELLS

An amateur dramatic performance was given in the New Hall on Monday by ladies and gentlemen who are already well known to Norfolk audiences. Notwithstanding the lateness of the season almost every reserved seat was taken, and there was a large and fashionable assembly, comprising the elite of the town and district.

1904 WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA

DANCE, - A successful invitation dance was held at the New Hall on Wednesday evening, under the management of Messrs. G. Leggett,, A. Ramm, jun., G. E. Dewing, and G. Eade. The duties of M.C. were discharged by Messrs. Ramm and Eade. The company numbered about 40. Dancing commenced at 8 o'clock and continued merrily until past one on Thursday morning, to the strains of music supplied by the Misses Lewton and Coe

E.D.P. 6.5.1905 WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA The Wells Amateur Minstrels, an off-shoot of the Wells Choral Society made their first appearance in public at the New Hall on Thursday, when an entertainment was organised on behalf of the Wells Branch of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution.. An excellent programme was presented to a crowded house. Mr. J. A. Butler had charge of the humorous portion, and Mr. H. T. Haynes the sentimental. The corner men were Messrs. Butler, Doyle, Edwards and S. Dewing, who gave some good local conundrums, which made a big hit. The songs were creditably rendered, the harmonised choruses coming out very well. Mr. F. Raven made a capital "Mr. Johnson," and the comedians did their parts

exceedingly well.....

The entertainment was repeated at Holkham on Friday, and the proceeds of the two performances will amount to a substantial sum.

1910 WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA

The Wells and District Skating Club held a successful carnival in the New Hall on Monday. To meet the requirements of the club the Oddfellow's Society recently laid down a new rock-maple floor, which has proved a great boon to skaters as well as a financial benefit to the society. On Monday the Hall was delightfully festooned with evergreens and draped with flags. The costumes were striking, and the gay scene was witnessed by a large audience. Prizes were offered for the best costumes and the best skaters, and there were also potato races and a musical chair competition. The judges of the ladies' costumes were Mrs. G. H. N. Ingle and Mrs. G. F. Smith and of the gentlemen's the Rev. G. H. N. Ingle and Mr. Walter Mudie, while Mr. F. A. Fisher and Mr. Sidney Everitt acted as judges of the skating. The judges had some difficulty in deciding as to the best lady's costume, but Miss H. Green, who typified "Weldon's," was declared the winner. Miss Lily Everitt, who made a fine presentment of an Italian, gained the prize as best lady skater. Mr. Ladas Smith's Dutch "get-up" gained him the prize for best gentleman's costume, and Mr. G. E. Dewing, who wore kilts, was declared the best gentleman skater.

Cynthia Jackson

FLOODS

Fortunately inundation by the sea does not occur very often and those who have taken up residence in Wells since 1978 may not have witnessed such an event.

Myrtle French has passed to me a copy of a letter relating to 1953 and is as follows:-

**New Holkham
17th February, 1953**

Dear Sylvia and Philip,

We hope you are all keeping well, as we are fairly alright at present.

Philip, I expect, has recovered from that accident by now. I expect you are well away from the floods, as you didn't mention anything in your letter.

Well, it's made a mess of Wells, all the north side of Freeman Street, the walls are smashed, even the bedrooms of some of them. Leyland Cottage garden wall and the others that way knocked down, sheep and bullocks drowned laying about, even some in Holkham Park, as it knocked the park wall down just past Jim's (Ivy Farm) and almost joined up with the lake. Brother Jim was at the reading rooms concert when it broke through. The Parson and Mr. Chandler got his cows out of the yard and took them up to the Glebe Land and Jim got home, and with a rope round his waist held by the other men, got the bull which was tied up in the shed. Jim got to him by the hay rack, he was in about 5 feet of water and the waves were terrific they say.

It broke the banks at Overy in 5 places and then Wells bank gave way, and the water met about Holkham.

We have Jims cows with our herd and he is with us. Mr. Flint has lost 50 growing heiffers and steers. They were in a pen, could not get to swim like the others did, and 22 heiffers and 2 bulls, they swam to the sand hills.

Harrisons of Warham had 475 sheep, they had only been on the marsh a few days, all drowned and Ramm lost several sheep and stock.

Wells bank has 5 gaps, one about 250 yards and deeper than the road, the sand hills near the tea rooms are gone, tea rooms and everything washed into the boating lake.

They are going to fill the big gaps with a big dredger from Lynn. Fire engines from Lancashire are pumping the water from the sewerage plant to get that going again. The bank at North Point broke in 5 places and of course the water went up Burnt Street. But fortunately, there was no lives lost at Wells, but

several at Hunstanton and Snettisham.

Well, its getting late so shall have to cut this off as we have to be up a little before 5 in the morning, but we get all the cows milked by 9.30. I'm afraid it will be months before Jim gets back again as there is water in the low places now.

Well, I'll say Good Night. Love to all. Percy

Items from the Secretary

Dr John Murray Valentine Boyles

Recently there have been a number of enquiries about the Murray and Boyles families.

Dr John Murray, 1721-1792 served as a ships surgeon until he settled in Wells in about 1751 and became a respected physician. He is buried in the churchyard here. A column placed in his memory contains an inscription, an extract of which follows:

"Dr John Murray: a man universally beloved and eminently distinguished by his domestic virtues and unaffected piety, professional abilities and extensive benevolence. To his Holy Memory this column is erected by his affectionate widow and children".

Murray is buried with his wife Mary (nee Boyles, from Stiffkey) and one of their eleven children, Thomas , who was also a doctor. Mary's father Valentine Boyles was Collector of Customs in Wells from 1737 to 1747 and was succeeded by his son, Charles who held the post until 1787.

John Murray moved his practice to Norwich in 1768, but all his children were baptised in Wells.

He is shown in the deeds of my house, then the Jolly Sailor Public house, as the owner from 1764 to 1789, though others of course were employed to sell the ale!

I am indebted to, amongst others, Richard Clinton, Rosemary Webb and Peter

Caspersonn for this information, all of whom would be pleased to here of any further knowledge you may have about either of these families.

Maureen Whiddett

I hope someone from Awards for All reads this, as it would seem that the grant we had from them, for the purchase of the microfilm/fiche reader was put to good use.

Requests to use our census and parish records for family history searches still come flooding in mainly via the Internet and e-mail. Since 2000, Bob Brownjohn, Mike Welland and I have answered enquiries about well over 200 family names. The families of Cadamy, Dickinson, Dickerson, Fryer, Loynes, Mann, Mussett, Rump, Smith, Warren, Woods and Wright all seem to attract much interest.

Maureen Whiddett

A.G.M.

The AGM will not be held on May 12th 2004 as programmed. A new date will be announced as soon as possible but it must be held in May.

A copy of the Rules will be enclosed with this Newsletter. Clauses 4 and 5 are relevant. Nominations are awaited!

The Book of Wells

The team continues to meet and we are confident of a successful publication. However, contributors are still welcome but a deadline has been established for submission of completed articles or any item. The date is 30th July 2004. Now this Newsletter has been seen to I am ready to receive items now.

Bob Brownjohn has agreed to co-ordinate picture copying and he, too, can be approached now. It may be that some pictures copied on Comma may need to be recopied by Bob. Contact Bob for guidance. No doubt many members have seen the recently published 'Book of Sculthorpe' in the same series that will provide 'The Book of Wells' - but your help is needed.

Getting Knotted

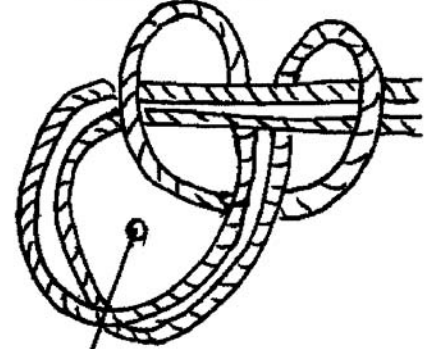
THE MONK'S BELT AS USED BY THE FRANCISCAN MONKS

These monks belonging to an order of St. Francis of Assisi involved the use of two knots namely the cow hitch and blood knot.

Blood Knot
(As used in
a
cat o' nine tails)



Cow Hitch



The belt fits around
the waist here and
is 15 to 18 feet long.

The blood knots are representative of the vows the monks had taken in the monk's order; a vow for each of the following: CHASTITY, OBEDIENCE, POVERTY.

Bob Huntington

EDITOR'S SOAP BOX

The Chairman has mentioned a logo for the Group and, because of timing, this will not head the Newsletter until after the A.G.M. (Assuming I am still a Committee member and Editor - your nominations may change things.) The logo is that on the "letter to everyone" distributed throughout the town.

Finally, Jean Terrington has continued to support the Group by producing the Newsletter on her computer during the past year. Thank you Jean.

David A. Perryman

WELLS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

RULES

1. **Name**
'Wells Local History Group' is intended to include the town of Wells-next-the-Sea and nearby villages and hamlets.
2. **Objectives**
The Group is established to:
 - i. research and record all aspects of the history of Wells and the surrounding area;
 - ii. increase public awareness of the social, historical and architectural heritage of the area;
 - iii. publish, as and when possible, the results of research carried out by the Group and others;
 - iv. advise and assist in maintaining the safe storage of historical information and artefacts;
 - v. make surveys, maps and plans and collect information relevant to the aims of the Group;
 - vi. hold meetings, lectures and exhibitions to promote interest in the history of Wells and the surrounding area;
 - vii. From time to time a Member's Newsletter will be produced.
3. **Membership and Subscriptions.**
 - i. Membership is open to all who are interested in the aims and objectives of the Group.
 - ii. All Members will be entitled to participate in all Group events and receive a copy of each Newsletter.
 - iii. Annual subscriptions will be determined by the Committee.
 - iv. The subscriptions will become due on the 1st October and cover the period to 30th September of the following year.
 - v. New members joining during or after May will be credited with their subscriptions as paid to the end of September of the following year.
 - vi. Membership will lapse if the subscription remains unpaid by 31st December.
4. **Annual General Meeting**
 - i. An A.G.M. will be held in May each year.
5. **The Committee**
 - i. An Executive Committee will be elected at each A.G.M. and shall consist of seven "paid up" members.
 - ii. The Committee will appoint the following officers: 1) Chairman, 2) Vice Chairman, 3) Secretary, 4) Treasurer, 5, 6 & 7) duties as required.

Executive Committee

 - i. Nominations for Executive Committee membership shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary at least 21 days prior to the date of the A.G.M.
 - ii. Existing members of the Committee shall confirm to the Secretary whether they are willing to continue membership of the Committee for a further 12 months, at least 21 days before the A.G.M.

Continuity of the Executive Committee

 - i. Immediately following the A.G.M. the "new" Executive Committee shall assemble to appoint the following Acting Officers 1) Chairman, 2) Vice Chairman, 3) Secretary and 4) Treasurer.
 - ii. The occupants of the above posts for the previous 12 months will be expected to liaise with their successors for a period not exceeding 21 days.
 - iii. Additional Committee Members may be co-opted.
 - iv. A Committee quorum shall be 5 members. Sub-committees may be formed as and when required.
 - v. The Executive Committee will meet at least three times during the period May to the end of April.
6. **Accounts**
 - i. The Treasurer will prepare an annual statement of the Group's financial position as at 31st March each year.
7. **Extra Ordinary General Meeting**
 - i. Notice of an E.G.M. called for by the Executive Committee will be given to all members by direct delivery.
 - ii. If any member of the Group believes a need has arisen for an E.G.M. a request for such a meeting shall be made in writing to the Secretary with a copy to the Chairman of the Group (or, if more appropriate, to the Vice Chairman) giving reasons, and countersigned by six other "paid up" members of the Group.
 - iii. The Executive Committee shall respond to the request within 28 days of the receipt of the letter..
8. **Winding Up**
 - i. The Group may be dissolved by a two-thirds majority of members voting at an Annual General Meeting or an Extra Ordinary General Meeting.
 - ii. Such meetings will determine the disposal of any assets of the Group.
 - iii. The quorum for an A.G.M. and/or E.G.M. will be 20 paid up members.
9. **Changes to the Rules**
 - i. Variations as deemed necessary by the Executive Committee will not be implemented without the authority of an A.G.M. or E.G.M. Proposals for change must be notified to the Secretary in writing at least 28 days prior to an A.G.M. or E.G.M