



WALBERSWICK

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO: 61

AUGUST 2020 – Lockdown Edition

Newsletter Editor's report

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Still no dates!

In the history of Walberswick the year 1953, and the terrible flooding along the east coast, still resonates. Many of us either remember it or think we remember it (I was only two years old). Will future generations recall what they did and where they were during the lockdown of 2020? The word "unprecedented" has been used so many times. Since the end of WWII most of us have been fortunate enough not to have experienced anything like it. As far as the WLHG newsletters are concerned this year has also been unprecedented. This will be the fifth edition of 2020 and, assuming a return to near normal, there will be six editions. Since the start in 1992 there have always only been two newsletters a year. Anyway, this is all leading up to saying that this is the last "Lock Down" edition of 2020. The next Newsletter, which will get to you in September/October, will be of the "regular" variety. We realise that people will emerge from the lockdown in different ways and at different speeds but it does look like we are now moving to the "new normal". When we can get back to the "old normal" is anyone's guess. Certainly, I look forward to sitting in a crowded pub and reminiscing about 2020, but I suspect that could be late 2021.

During lockdown we have distributed newsletters electronically where ever possible by email. This has been so easy and economical and we plan to continue to distribute them that way to members who have supplied an email. Should you really want to return to a paper copy please register your preference with our membership secretary, Edward Wright before the end of August - ewright123@btinternet.com. No fear, those without email will continue to get a printed copy via the letter box.

In the covering email to the last edition I noted that Pat Lancaster and Kay Ungless have recently added Newsletters 1-40 to the web site. These make fascinating reading and the first article is about the history of the WLHG newsletters, newsletter editors and some of the people and subjects included in those early issues.

History can be as recent as earlier today. I am still hoping that someone will submit a "lockdown in Walberswick" article. I am very pleased to have persuaded Peppy Scott to follow in her father's footsteps and write something for the Newsletter. This is about when Walberswick still had a school. OK, maybe not that recent but quite recent.

Last, but not least, we have another Walberswick book you can add to your book-shelf (after reading it of course). See the short review including details of how you can get a copy of Edward Wright's book on Millfield Road.

John English - Newsletter Editor – email johnrenglish@tiscali.co.uk

A Short History of the WLHG Newsletters – John English with help from Philip Kett, Kay Ungless and Pat Lancaster

You can now read all 60 editions of the WLHG newsletters on line. During lockdown Pat Lancaster and Kay Ungless got together (at a distance!) and made this possible. You can find these gems on the Walberswick One Suffolk web site or by going to <https://tinyurl.com/wlhgnews>. There is quite a lot to look at so if you are after something in particular then you can look at the contents by clicking “summary of Contents” at the top of the web newsletter page or by clicking on the following - <http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/assets/WLHG/WLHG-news-letters/NEWSLETTER-SCHEDULE.pdf>

This is a real treasure trove. The newsletters can take you on a journey. It’s only 28 years since issue #1 but it feels a lot longer – so much the same and yet so much has changed. There are the people who wrote the articles, many sadly no longer with us, and the articles themselves, interesting for so many reasons. Take a look at the contents and I am sure you will find something fascinating. Below are some of the people and the subjects that caught my eye. I am sure that you will come up with a different selection if you look but I am also sure there will be something there for you.

Some of my highlights from the newly-available newsletters

Some names stand out for me as regular and/or important contributors to WLHG and the newsletters – I could have added more but limited myself to four:

David Lee, perhaps our oldest/longest member or certainly one of them, writes about the ferry in issue #9. This is consistent with David’s interest in transport. David is the foremost expert on the Southwold Railway and has written many times on the subject, including a recent book we looked at a few issues back. David is still producing work for us and just recently contributed an article on Walberswick station masters.

Hanns Lange, in issue #11, writes about his epic piece of work “Families of Walberswick”. Hanns is one of my WLHG heroes – see a previous article (issue 51). His contribution was enormous. His register of families is available to consult on the onesuffolk web site - <http://walberswick.onesuffolk.net/walberswick-local-history-group/families-hanns-lange/>.

Maurice Godbold, a great contributor, shows his expertise on wills in issue #13. In issue # 29 he writes about “Freddie Eade Walberswick's Last Professional Fisherman?” Continuing the fishing theme in issue #30 he writes about “Fishing in Walberswick”, in issue #31 “Fishing in Walberswick - Part 2” and in issue #33 “The English Family and the Sea 1841 TO 1901”. We need more people like Maurice.

Richard Scott was another prolific contributor. In issue #34 he starts his series on "Walberswick Characters" with Blucher English. In issue #35 it’s Dinks Cooper, issue #37 Jimmy Meakins and in issue #38 Margaret Orbell.

Reading through 40 issues takes a while and I was inevitably drawn to some articles more than others. It’s all good but the following particularly resonated:

In issue #13 **Tony Rees** (see later write-up on editors) writes about “Walberswick Wells”. This article did not just record information on wells but the subsequent incomings and outgoings of water services. Piped water arrived in 1927 and the familiar water tower at the crossroads was built in 1955. That covers “incoming”. Mains drainage did not come until 1965! I still remember my grandfather’s lectures on filling the bath (or rather not filling the bath). Too much water in the bath and, on pulling the plug, bath water and other things could be distributed over the back yard.

I was fascinated to see issue #20 and “Creek Cottage”, by **Barbara Priestman**, in which she says “Creek Cottage was built by Robert English - Owen's father (and my grandfather – him of the bath water) - in the early 1930s”. I will investigate this further in a future issue.

Finally I was drawn to issue #40 and **Philip Kett** looking forward to WLHG 20th Anniversary on 7th January 1992. I can only echo the sentiments of the editor at the time who said *"It is impossible not to be impressed by the energy and enthusiasm shown by the founders of the History Group, and we continue to be very much in their debt"*.

A Short History of Newsletter Editors

Pat Wythe (1992, nos. 1&2, 1996 no. 10 and 1998-2003 no. 14-23): Pat, along with Don Thompson, initially proposed setting up the WLHG. Pat is certainly one of the "heroes" of WLHG. She did a tremendous amount of research for the archives. One example was listing every single dwelling in the village and finding out as much as she could about the history of the house and who had lived there. It was an incredible achievement and a very valuable piece of research for the Village archives.

Pat was the first Newsletter editor but only remained in that post for two editions. However, we see her back in 1996 for one edition and then back again in 1998 to 2003 as "temporary" editor. Five years is a long time to be a temporary editor and it would be interesting to know why that was. The first two editions look typed but those following are "justified" – a sure sign of a word processor being used. Bill and Kay Ungless remember in around 1992 Pat working on an Amstrad (not a PC but it did word processing). Not everyone possessed the required skills or equipment in 1996. Maybe that was a factor in getting someone to follow Derrick Allen (see next). Also, although only a bi-annual publication, it does need a person with the time and interest to generate the content. Pat was clearly very good at this. The very first newsletter is really the minutes of the inaugural meeting of WLHG held on 7th January 1992. Thirty members attended from a membership of 50. Over a quarter of a century later WLHG is still going strong with a membership of well over a 100. We owe it all to Pat and that small band of movers and shakers, the WLHG working group. We should do something on WLHG "Chairs" in a future issue. I will ask Philip.

Pat Wythe and her husband came to live in Walberswick around 1988, moving here from Royston. There is an article from the Royston Crow about Pat in the archives. Before marrying Pat served with The Women's Auxillary Service (Burma), joining in 1945. Later she was commissioned in the WRAC. After marriage in 1953 she became, as he calls it, an "army wife". You can read all about her in "Suffolk Memories" compiled by David Shirreff and Arthur Sharman. The second volume "Further Suffolk Memories" was compiled by Arthur Sharman and Pat Wythe. Still remembered in the village she is greatly missed.

Derrick Allen (1993–1996, nos. 3-9): By the time the third newsletter came out in January 1993 there was a new Editor, Derrick Allen. Many of us still remember Derrick. He was one of the members who was brought up in the area and had first-hand knowledge. He is mentioned in the prologue to "Suffolk Memories", compiled by David Shirreff and Arthur Sharman and published in 1998. Sadly, as the authors note, Derrick died before his story of life in the Fleet Air Arm could be collected. They mention him being a stalwart of the local RBL for many years. It fell to Pat Wythe to take back the editorship and refer to Derrick's sad demise in issue number 10, August 1996.

It is my sad task to write the editorial for this Newsletter. The loss of Derrick Allen is being deeply felt by his many friends in the village and by all the organisations to which he gave his enthusiastic support, not least by the Local History Group, of which he was a founder member. He was so interested in all aspects of the village and delighted in discovering details of life in the past. We shall greatly miss his knowledge of Suffolk and his contributions to the record of our history. The Committee would welcome recollections of Derrick from members (either written or that we can record on tape). We feel it would be a fitting memorial if we could compile a memoir of him for the archives. I know that many people will remember him for his friendship and his many kindnesses and we must see that he is suitably remembered in the story of Walberswick.

Derrick Allen was born in Darsham and went to school in Halesworth. His father was a porter at Darsham railway station and Derrick used the train to get to and from school. Derrick was a chef in the Navy and also served on the sail training ship "Winston Churchill". After returning to Walberswick he married Mary. For those of a certain age who were around at the time "Mary" is all that needs to be said. Mary used to holiday in Walberswick and one year never went home again. Together they opened "Mary's", still fondly remembered today. It was immensely popular at a time when pubs had not quite caught on to providing food. A great believer in village life and everything in it he supported everything that needed support. His mother, known as "Marzie", was a well-known village character.

David Davison (1996-1998, nos. 11-13): David Davison edited the 11th edition and produced a further two. We are grateful to the long memory of Philip Kett in providing details of David Davison. Philip recalls that David had been a member of WLHG for a few years when once again the group required a new Newsletter editor. He agreed to have a go at it [and became the 3rd editor]. As a member of WLHG he undertook some research into the New Dunwich River. This entailed several journeys to Ipswich Record Office searching the archives of the Blois and Barnes families. The New Dunwich River was also known as The Went or The Creek. When it was originally dug around 1750 it went by the name of Howletts Cut, draining the water from the Westwood Marshes with the aid of the brick-built mill when the natural drainage sluice was shut. The Old Dunwich River flowed from Walberswick to Dunwich and thence to the sea. The New Dunwich River flows from Dunwich to Walberswick and then the sea. Go back and visit issue number 8, August 1995 to read David's full account - THE MAKING OF THE NEW DUNWICH RIVER. 1808-1828. It is a fantastic piece of work.

David and his wife lived in Cloudcroft, Stocks Lane. This was probably a retirement home. Before they came to Walberswick they used to holiday and weekend at Dingle Farm on the south side of Dingle Hill. This may have been purchased by the family after WW2 and he was certainly familiar with the area. In 1998 they moved to a bungalow in Southwold, not far from the pier.

The departure of the Davidson's to far-away Southwold seems to have precipitated a problem for WLHG. Into the breach stepped Pat Wythe who continued in her temporary position until 2003!

Julia Reisz (2003-2012, nos. 24-42): At the start of edition 24 Pat Wythe says "At last we have a new editor". You can sense the relief as Pat relinquished her temporary position. After 11 years WLHG had its fourth editor. It was clearly a good appointment as Julia stayed on for nine years and 18 editions. Julia holds the joint record of most editions edited along with Pat Wythe. Julia is way out in front if you count continuous editorship.

Julia went to school in Walberswick and is one of the people we consult about times too far back for most of us to remember. Her father was the author A E Coppard. In her own words you can find out more about Julia in issue #22 "A THIRTIES CHILDHOOD IN WALBERSWICK". Here are some edits:

"I first came to Walberswick in 1932 as a child of five. Because our house was not yet ready, we spent the first night at Dudley Cottage, which at that time was a guest house kept by Miss Reynolds, the sister of the owner of the village shop".

"After that first night we moved into our house in Leverett's Lane, which was called Due South. This is the house which is now known as Toby Cottage".

Julia attended the Village School: *"My friends were Betty Strange (whose father was chauffeur to Sir Ralph Blois), Heather Block, Joyce Bloomfield and Ann Denny. My brother's particular friend was Victor Fairs, and after my brother moved back to Suffolk some years ago he and Victor met regularly for golf until Victor died. Other children I remember from the village school were Tony English (Owen's brother, nicknamed "Sergeant"), Ivan and Jill Cady, Avril Eade, Lionel and Beryl Sharman, Peggy and John Bloomfield and Victor's young brother Dennis - in fact I remember the day Dennis started school. Victor just brought him along the day he turned five, and that was that. I also recall Cissy and Molly English - Scarborough's daughters."*

Helen Baxter (2013-2015, nos. 43-47): Again I have to thank Philip Kett for memories of Helen Baxter. Helen Baxter came to Walberswick to live and work with her friend Penelope Allport. As a book editor through her efforts the book "The Walberswick Frigate" was published. Living at 12 Church Lane she had a mother living in Wenhaston for several years. Helen lived in Walberswick for about 20 years and took part in village activities, country dance classes and sailing. In fact she didn't just take part in country dancing but organised it. Kay Ungless remembers regularly entering the dance classes into the website Diary. Here is one entry:

If you like something out of the ordinary and enjoy experiencing something new every so often, why not give this dancing a go? The session comprises traditional ethnic dances from countries in the Balkans: Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Rumania, Turkey among others. Sometimes we go further afield and try Armenian or Russian dances. £5.00 for the session; tea, coffee and eats provided, plus a very warm and welcoming atmosphere.

Kay did ask her why Balkans but cannot remember her answer other than it was different!

Pat Lancaster: (2015-2018, nos. 48-53): What can I say about Pat Lancaster? If you do not know Pat then you really do not know Walberswick. Pat should never really have been newsletter editor as she already had the demanding position of archivist. After Helen Baxter departed Pat took on the job and kept it going until she found someone else to give it to. At one time Pat was secretary and newsletter editor as well as archivist. I like to count Pat as a friend so I will say no more other than whatever Pat does she does it well.

Pat and Tony Lancaster were coming to Walberswick from the late 1960s but eventually came to live here in 1979. Tony retired in 1996 and Pat "retired" to Walberswick from her London career in 1998. However, retirement didn't really sit well with her and she worked locally until 2017 when Tony passed away. Apart from her History Group activities, she is one of the volunteers who collect prescriptions, is the Distribution Manager for the Village News and can often be seen out "birding" and maintaining the Bird Hide.

John English: (2018-ongoing, nos. 54-61): Pat eventually persuaded me to take on the editor position and here I am, into my 8th edition. I had previously provided content for both Julia and Pat. All I can say is that to keep going you need support and I have had that – thank you! I need more! Lockdown has consumed a lot. If you feel you have something you would like to share then let me know. If you have old pictures of Walberswick then even better. We do not want miss your story!

I must be the only WLHG editor who has never lived in Walberswick. I was honored to be asked to join the committee way back and happy to take over from Pat as editor. I have known Walberswick all my life and can trace my family back in Walberswick to the 1700's. It has always been a magical place in my life. I was born in Amersham in 1951, brought up in Chesham, moved around and since 1980 I have lived in Wokingham. During all that time Walberswick has been a constant. As my father got older he complained "it's not the same anymore". I would tell him off but now I know what he meant. It's not the same any more but that is the nature of life. It's different and we need to capture how it has changed and memories of who once lived here before we all move on.

One person who did live, and grow up here, and comes back regularly is Peppy Scott. The previous edition was dedicated to Peppy's father, Richard Scott. Peppy's parents were big supporters of WLHG and Richard wrote many an article. I am hoping Peppy can continue the tradition!

Memories of a Walberswick Childhood – Peppy Scott

My father Richard was a contributor to the Walberswick Local History Group, so I was pleased to be invited to record some childhood memories for the newsletter. I resemble my father in a number of ways but, regrettably, I have not inherited his archival memory for historic detail, so I will have to paint a hazy word picture from a child's perspective rather than producing a reference work. One date I do know: he moved back to Walberswick in late 1965 with my mother and me, when I was less than a year old.

My sister and I attended Walberswick County Primary School in the early 1970's, until its closure, and we were lucky to do so. The headmistress – there were no head teachers or principals back then, she was very much a headmistress – was firm, fair and daunting to small children. Mrs O'Neill ran a tight ship. Standards of behaviour were required to be high, and Spam fritters were still on the county menu, served with shredded cabbage by the equally daunting school cook, Mrs List. The Lists lived at the top of the green in what is now the Edwards residence. Twice a week their two front rooms became the GP surgery and waiting room, where we would be taken to see the daunting Dr Ogilvie. My mother assures me that these daunting characters from my childhood were all delightfully kind people.

The school was a single-storey pebble-dashed building which was, in effect, just one schoolroom. Pupils were divided into Infants and Juniors, with a wooden partition that could be drawn across the room when needed. We were fewer than two dozen in number. There were separate entrances for boys and girls leading into a communal area behind the schoolroom, which was lined with coat hooks and contained the secretary's desk, a water fountain and a couple of small hand basins. Back in fashion now, hand-washing was quite a feature of the school day. There was a dark, narrow store cupboard to the back of this area where we would occasionally be sent for supplies. The prospect of entering it alone terrified me because on one of the higher shelves an adder lurked in a jar of formaldehyde, like some sinister and unmentionable secret.

Each morning the school milk crate was delivered and would sit with its contents warming beneath our coats until morning break, when the bottles were distributed and the milk consumed through straws and under duress. It was a form of torture and resistance was futile. I failed to understand why anyone was upset when Mrs Thatcher later snatched the milk away. She was too late to rescue us.

Meals were cooked on site in a kitchen off the vestibule which was strictly out of bounds to pupils. The appointed lunch monitors helped turn the schoolroom into a dining area and then, when lunch was ready, rounded up their schoolmates from the playground. There was a formal method for achieving this, which was to clap. Somehow, though, we found it more effective to run out to the playground shouting, 'CLAAAAAAP!' It worked just as well. Hands were washed and grace was said: *'For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful. Amen.'*

I was never truly thankful on Spam fritters day.

Behind the school building, a fence divided the girls' exclusive area from the boys' area, running down to a small toilet block at the back. It was both a small block for toilets and a block for small toilets, with one adult-sized loo for staff on the girls' side. There was also a tiny pond just beyond the boundary on the girls' side. An old butler's sink set in a grassy area of the playground, its purpose, I think, was to encourage the observation of tadpoles. Health & Safety had yet to be invented, which meant we enjoyed unrestricted and unsupervised access to the two metal climbing frames (the "apparatus") which were set on the tarmac playground. We all survived that peril, but the girls favoured hopscotch, which was drawn by hand.



School Photograph - which one is Peppy?

The school field to the rear was only open in the summer at playtimes and for PE, which was usually rounders. Sunny summer lunchtimes were spent catching grasshoppers beneath a hedge on the bank which marked the school boundary. In the summer term a temporary swimming pool for the Infants appeared at the top of the field, but the Juniors took weekly trips to Reydon School to use the permanent pool there.

Occasionally we were taken on a school trip. I recall a day out by coach to Kessingland Wildlife Park, as it was known long before becoming the much more glamorous Africa Alive. It must have been an underwhelming experience as my clearest memory of that visit is a moment of joy at discovering a treat in my packed lunch: a bag of peppermint flavoured Walberswick Homemade Fudge, the product of a cottage industry my mother took over from her mother-in-law, dating back to the days of Cookery Nook. Rather more exciting was the flight in a light aircraft over Nacton shore, though I mostly remember the nausea and praying I would not disgrace myself by throwing up in the plane.

School assemblies also involved prayer and the singing of hymns, accompanied by Mrs O'Neill on the piano. We favoured the jauntier numbers such as *At The Name Of Jesus* and *When A Knight Won His Spurs*. Being commended by Mrs O'Neill for lusty hymn singing was both an accolade and a mortifying embarrassment. More enjoyable was the weekly wheeling out of the television set so the whole school could tune in and sing along to BBC *Music Time*.

The annual Nativity play was memorable for starring one of Mrs Noden's donkeys. I was concerned about the possibility of an animal toilet accident indoors and was slightly disappointed that it never happened. The donkeys played their part like professionals, incentivised by a constant supply of Polo mints. I, on the other hand, when cast to play Mary, managed to fall off the donkey.

The school uniform consisted of royal blue sweaters, white shirts and grey shorts or skirts, according to gender, there being no confusion about that then. Boys were discriminated against by having to wear a tie. Haircuts were not prescribed but were mostly in the pudding bowl style. Rules were rules, but in the last year of his primary school career Michael Fisher, of Fisher's Garage, grew too tall for school shorts and was granted a special dispensation to come to school in long trousers, which was very grown up. It also forced a debate about the rules of hopscotch. We eventually agreed that, if the cuff of his trousers overhung the line, he would be judged "out". It was harsh, but that was the price to be paid for his privilege

Readers may recall some of Edward's articles about Millfield Road in previous editions. Now Edward has pulled all his various researches together into a book. I am fortunate to already have my copy (many thanks Edward). Edward is following in the footsteps of the great WLHG researchers, people like Pat Wythe who researched all the houses in Walberswick. I recommend you get your copy quickly. I am not sure what the print run was but I expect copies will go like the proverbial hot cakes. Not only will you acquire a lovely book but you will be supporting the Sole Bay Care Fund, an institution close to many hearts locally.

The People of Millfield Road: A Book by Edward Wright

This is the story of the people who built and lived in Millfield Road in the first half of the 20th Century. Rupert Brooke's fiancée Noel Olivier wrote to him in 1910 from a house overlooking the new road:

I get taken round to teas and tennis and into lovely drawing rooms after supper to see exquisite furniture and hear music, also I am introduced into picture shows and music.

Who were the people in these drawing rooms, why did they come here and what sort of lives did they live? Trying to answer these questions, I researched each of the early houses and those who lived in them; Catherine Vanneck at Dudley, for example. She was married to a son of Lord Huntingfield and they had houses in London and Darsham. Why she built a house in the road is a mystery, perhaps it has something to do with the state of her marriage which soon ended in divorce? At Threeways, Cecilia Morgan described herself as married but was single, the father of her son Henry having married another woman soon after the boy was born. The writer George Orwell was Henry's tutor. At Far End, the silversmith Philip Alexander and his artist wife Frances educated their two daughters at home. One would marry into the Bloomsbury Group and the other become a world-famous calligrapher. After the Second World War, the arrival of Iris Birtwhistle and her chicken shed art gallery caused trouble because she encouraged her visitors to park in her neighbours' drives. Iris is reputed to have sold early David Hockney drawings for £5 each.

The illustrated book is seventy-six pages long and all proceeds will go to Sole Bay Care Fund. If you would like one, please send a cheque for £10 payable to Sole Bay Care Fund and your address to:

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