

Wells Local History Group Newsletter



Wells Golf Club – North Point

Charles Edward Able

North Norfolk after the Romans

1845 Royal Tidal Harbours Commission Court

Number 74 – Spring 2020

The big news this issue is that the Archive Room in the Wells Maltings will be opening officially on Tuesday 14th April. From that date onwards we intend to open every Tuesday morning from 10.30am to 12.30pm and every Friday afternoon from 2.00pm to 4.00pm.

We are still looking for volunteers to help man it – the more that come forward the less-often will they have to attend. I would like to have about 16, so that nobody has to be there more than once every month (ish). The job of the volunteers will be twofold; firstly, to assist enquirers with any and every query, secondly to gradually index the collection, so that it is easier for everybody to find what they are looking for.

As an example, a few of us have been working in there over the past few weeks. Bob Brownjohn has advised me that over 8000 of our photographs are now indexed. However, he believes that this is only about 20% of our current collection! Don't worry about queries – if you don't know the answer, you just have to take contact details – because somebody else will probably be able to provide a solution.

And if you live away, (and 60 of our members do) and you are visiting the town this spring, summer, or autumn, give us a look – we are on the first floor of the Maltings – accessible by stairs or a lift.

Official Notice – The AGM looms – if you would like to be nominated for the committee or have anything else that you would like to bring up, please advise us before the end of April. The AGM will be on Wednesday 13th of May

Keith Leesmith

The Wells next the Sea Golf Club

Most local people when asked for the location of the original town Golf Course would place it to the west side of Beach Road. This has been the site of the Putting Green, but with no connection to the early golf course. That golf course was at the site of what is now known as North Point.



Above is an extract from the 1904 Ordnance Survey map of the east side of Wells-next-the-Sea. The golf course is marked on the extreme right of the map. It was accessed from the town by the East Bank to the point where the bank turns to the north. From that corner of the bank a short path was constructed leading to a footbridge crossing a creek leading into the main channel to the south. The links course was actually situated in the parish of Warham.

Whether the course was in use prior to the formation of the Golf Club is not clear. On 25th June 1894 fifteen men met

at the Edinburgh to debate the establishment of a golf club in the town. As usual with most events and meetings in the town, Edward Bunting Loynes presided and was also elected permanent chairman of the committee. The establishment of a club was proposed by George J. Smith and seconded by A. J. Napier. It was the latter who was to become the driving force behind the club throughout its existence. James Alexander Davidson was firstly elected honorary secretary, but he declined the position on the basis that he did not have sufficient time. He would take on the role of joint secretary, and Napier was therefore unanimously elected as the other joint secretary.

Napier said that he was glad that the club had been fortunate in securing links, and although he said that they could not be considered first class he thought that they would soon become popular, and that in time that the course could be extended. A Ground Committee was formed to examine the existing links and ground, which suggests that some form of golf course may have already existed. The names of twenty members were read out by the secretary as having already consented to join the new club. The amount of subscriptions and entrance fees would be decided at a future meeting. At the close of this meeting a vote of thanks to Major J E. Groom and to Mr E Nelson was accorded in allowing the club the use of their grounds.

The following month, the 5th July, another meeting of the Golf Club met to discuss future plans. The Links Committee had inspected the course and submitted a plan of the land with suggestions for necessary alteration and improvements. It was decided that plan be adopted, subject to the agreement of the Wells Harbour Commissioners.

The playing charges were then discussed, and it was agreed that the annual subscription for existing members would be ten shillings a year, but that future members should be charged £1. Mr Napier proposed that ladies should be admitted on payment of two shillings and sixpence and this was also agreed. Visitors could be admitted to play, but only on the introduction of two members, and these visitors would be charged two shillings and sixpence a week. It was then resolved that members of the club could admit a friend, or friends for two consecutive days in one year with no payment, providing that these visitors' names were entered in a visitor's book and authorised by the introducing members. Future members applications had to be submitted to the secretaries and be approved by the committee before election. It was decided to invite the Earl of Leicester, and Viscount Coke, to become patron and vice-patron.

At a meeting of the Harbour Commissioners at the Crown Hotel, again chaired by Edward Bunting Loynes, the golf committee attended and asked permission to straighten one of the small creeks to the east of the bridge leading to North Point from the Stiffkey Road. A plan of the proposed alteration was submitted and approved.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Golf Club was held at the Crown Hotel on 25th February 1895. The accounts for the past year were produced and the showed a balance in hand of £4. It was decided that Major J. E Groom should be consulted about the proposed extension of the golf links. It is presumed that Groom was the owner or manager of the land involved.

In 1895 the town was visited by Mr Louis Grier who had been informed during his stay that the golf club was badly in need of a golf house on the grounds. It was reported that – “He had great pleasure in offering the club a picture of sufficient value to defray the expense of the building of the house.” Louis Grier, 1864-1920, was an Australian artist, famous for his marine and landscape paintings who was presumably visiting Wells for artistic reasons. His offer was gratefully accepted, and a vote of thanks was offered to him at a meeting held at the Crown on May 1st of that year.

Also, at that meeting it was decided that Mr Thomas Platten’s estimate for the building of a club house be accepted. It was to be built with a corrugated iron roof, and dimensions of 14 feet by 10 feet. Mr Platten undertook to complete the work by Tuesday May 10th, less than two weeks after the decision was taken. It was proposed by A. J. Napier and seconded by Mr Louise Grier that Mr Platten’s estimate be accepted.



This early postcard shows the footbridge leading to the Golf Links at North Point, with the newly erected club house in the distance.



The Chairman announced to the 1895 meeting “that their esteemed friend” Mr George F. Smith had presented the club with a handsome embossed silver bowl on an ebony stand. He had done this on condition that it should be competed for on handicap terms and be open only to existing members on that day, May 1st, 1895. His other condition was that if the club should cease to exist at any time that the Cup be returned to him. It was decided that the prize would be competed for twice a year. The challenge bowl was supplied by Messrs Allen & Daws of London Street, Norwich, and newspapers advised readers that the “handsome silver bowl” could be seen exhibited in the makers windows for some days.

The Wells golf club made several visits to other North Norfolk Clubs for competition matches. There were links courses at Cromer Blakeney, Brancaster, and Hunstanton, in addition to golf courses at places such as Fakenham. In July 1895 the Wells club visited the Blakeney and Cley club when the match was said to be “most enjoyable, and of a friendly character.” There were six members of each team.” When the respective scores were added up, they were said to be exactly alike.”

When the second A.G.M. took place at the Crown in February 1896 the club was said to have a small surplus despite the expenses in making a roadway to the ground. The details of this “roadway” were not explained, but it may have been the path laid between the East Bank and the footbridge onto the links course. The members of the existing committee were re-elected with two additions, Messrs Middleton and Kersley. Several new members were proposed, but it is apparent from the names of those involved in the club that all were of some status in the town or surrounding area. It would appear to have been quite a select membership. It was decided at the meeting that there would be a monthly medal competition, but how this was to be organised and scored was not reported.

The first of the Monthly Medal Competitions took place on a Wednesday following the A.G.M. Sydney Everitt was the winner of the Gentlemen competition with a score of 104, but a net of 79 after deducting his handicap of 25. Miss Everitt was the Ladies winner with a score of 115 strokes less her handicap of 16.

Yet another award was offered at the following A.G.M. in January 1897. James Alexander Davidson told the gathering that he would like to present the club with a silver cigarette case for competition among the members.

He would leave the details of the competition for the committee to decide. In addition to thanking Mr Davidson for his kind offer the Chairman accorded his thanks to Mr Platten, for carting material used in the repair of the roadway leading to the ground at no charge to the club.

The Handicap Committee of the Golf Club met at the Crown on January 22nd to decide on the conditions for the competition for awarding the silver cigarette case presented by Mr Davidson.

The unanimous decision was that there should be six competitions on the second Monday of each month between April and September, and the player winning the greatest number of times was to receive the award. In the event of two or more members tying scores, a play-off match would be arranged.

By July of that year four matches had taken place. On that month the winner was Mr Hastings with a net score of 82. There were six competitors, including Mr Davidson, but at that stage no competitor had won more than one match. In the final fifth match A. J. Napier was the winner with a round score of 75, his second win and the only player to have succeeded in winning two matches.

At the 1899 A.G.M held on 21st January it was announced that the club had a balance of £2.3s.11d, that the membership of the club was steadily increasing, the Links were in first class condition, and the debt on the building of the club house fully paid off.

The President Mr Loynes, said it was his intention to present a prize for a competition among the members, and it was also decided to hold a tournament on the American system between the members. The committee members were all re-elected, Mr Loynes was re-elected President and A.J. Napier secretary.

Alexander James Napier was connected with the club from the outset until its end. He was born in Holkham in 1854, and after a period in London employed as an insurance clerk, he returned to Holkham. On Holkham census returns his occupations listed included, Librarian, Insurance Agent, Wine and Spirit Trader, and Commission Agent.

The prize presented by Mr Loynes, referred to at the 1899 A.G.M. was described as an elegant inkstand. The first winner of the prize was Mr F. Andrews of Fakenham at the Wells Club spring meeting held in May 1900. The competition was open to members of any recognised Norfolk golf club. Another competition held at the event was a gentlemen's driving challenge, won by W. E. Napier, hitting his ball 175 yards. The ladies competed for a silver scent bottle, and that was won by Mrs Hudson of Blakeney. Mrs Sumpter of Hunstanton, who hit her ball 140 yards, was the winner of the ladies driving competition.

This was the scorecard for the half-yearly cup prize, also held in May 1900, on greens that were described as being in excellent condition:

	Gross.	Hcp.	Net.
Mr. E. B. Loynes	99	15	84
Mr. Sidney Everitt	103	17	86
Mr. B. Middleton.....	107	16	91
Mr. A. J. Napier	106	13	93
Mr. Edward Nelson..	122	25	97
Mr. G. F. Smith	130	20	100
No other cards were returned.			

In August 1899 under the heading NOTES FOR VISITORS was written - The Wells Golf Links are open to visitors on payment of a nominal charge.

The Wells Golf Club continued to exist until at least 1912, but almost nothing was recorded of its activities beyond 1900. In 1902 the one reported event was the discovery of the body of John Carmen, former landlord of the Park Tavern, in the creek adjoining the golf course. The body was located at ten o'clock in the morning of 16th October by Robert George Hall, who was described as a green keeper at the Wells Golf Club.

The trade directories of 1908 and 1912 had entries for Wells Golf Club listing the secretary as A. J. Napier, with the clubs headquarter as the Crown Hotel. These entries were the last records found of the club. The reason for its demise is not known

Mike Welland

also see page 12

Wells Golf Club Bridges

Look again at the postcard picture on page 7 and also the map at the bottom of page 6. The first picture below shows the current state of the “postcard bridge”, the second the other bridge – marked “FB” on the map.



Charles Edward ABLE

If you aren't a fan of family history, you probably won't have heard of the website Find a Grave www.findagrave.com. The website consists of virtual churchyards and cemeteries all over the world. For example, let's say someone in Australia had a much-loved relative who lived and died in Wells; but they had never seen their final resting place. People can go on the website, create a virtual memorial to their loved ones in the correct cemetery or churchyard. They can then make a request for someone who lives nearby to take a photo of the headstone. Once the digital photo is taken and downloaded to a computer, it can then be uploaded to the correct memorial on the Find a Grave website. Having fulfilled the photo request, an email notification goes out to the person who requested the photo. They can then see their loved ones final resting place.

I tend to take gravestone photos and create the memorials afterwards or just add photos if the memorial already exists. I'd taken some photos in Wells Market Lane Cemetery. I always carry out as much research on the deceased as possible. The research is to ascertain when and where they were born and when and where they died. The more you know, the more accurate the memorial can be. I was researching a soldier named C. A. Able who is buried in Market Lane Cemetery. While searching online for his particulars I noticed I could only find a C. E. Able on the census. I thought an error must have occurred when creating his headstone by the CWGC (Commonwealth War Graves Commission).



To get a military headstone corrected by the CWGC, you have to send in documentary proof; otherwise no change will be made. C.A. Able appears as C. E. Able on Wells War Memorial so that was a good start to the proof process. However, I also had to search the census, acquire birth and death certificates and any military records I could find that listed Charles with his correct middle name or initial. Fortunately, for certain years, you can buy less expensive .pdf

formats of birth and death certificates that contain full details. I sent off for Charles birth and death certificates from the GRO (General Register Office) and I went online to obtain as much proof about this man as possible.

This is what I discovered about Charles Edward Able. He was born on 26th November 1906 at The Glebe, Wells next the Sea. His parents were Albert James Able, a fisherman, and Annie Able nee Reeve. The father was born in Trowse, Norfolk and the mother in Cley, Norfolk. On the 1911 census they are living at The Glebe in Wells. All their six children were born in Wells. On the 1939 Register the family are still at The Glebe. The father is now a retired fisherman and Charles occupation is given as General Labourer Stiffkey AA Camp.

Charles was a gunner in the Royal Artillery. I found an attestation document and a casualty card all with the correct middle name. But when I discovered the grave registration documents, they were all in the name of C. A. Able. I can only surmise that the military had been corresponding with Charles father, Albert Able, and Albert's initial was somehow substituted for Edward. Charles death certificate gives his name as Charles Edward and his address as 17, The Glebe, Wells. He died on 21st April 1941 at Plymouth, Devon in Cumberland Block. I could find just one online reference to Cumberland Block and that was in relation to Raglan Engineers Depot. Perhaps part of a military barracks? Cause of death was listed as: Due To War Operations. After googling the date and Plymouth, I found a link on the BBC People's War Website:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/59/a1951959.shtml> it would seem on the day Charles Edward Able died, there was a particularly destructive air raid on Plymouth with much loss of life.

I sent all the documentary proof to the CWGC and expected a lengthy wait. However, after about a fortnight I had a reply from a Maria Choules. She said: "Thank you for your email regarding this gentleman. You will be pleased to hear that we have amended our records and this will appear on our website at the next update. Arrangements are in hand to amend the headstone. We cannot say at this stage when this will take place as it will have to be scheduled into our busy works programme. Thank you again for bringing this gentleman to our attention. We will be in contact again when the headstone has been amended".



The Wells (Institute) War Memorial, showing Charles Able's name with the correct middle initial

All of this took place in the year we commemorated the end of World War One. Although Charles died in World War Two, I was pleased I had done my bit to ensure that “Their Name Liveth For Evermore.”

Lynn Sharpe

North Norfolk after the Romans went

Much material for this article comes from Tom Williamson *The Origins of Norfolk* (1933)

If you were to sail towards the North Norfolk coast from out to sea you would get some idea of what it was like fifteen hundred years ago when the Anglo-Saxon intrusions took place. What you would see is a strip of land, at first grey and then gradually green and brown. The buildings are invisible until you get quite close. The settlements of Thornham, Brancaster, Deepdale, Overy and Wells which seem a semi-continuous strip in parts when you drive along the coast road look small and insignificant from the sea, even now. If you were an Angle, one of a number of Germanic peoples, seeking booty or fresh lands – who knows – you would have known from others of your clan that there were the rivers of the Wash down which to sail, the Ouse, Nene and Welland, but perhaps you had chosen to go further east.

Your shallow drafted vessel could negotiate shoal grounds; your single square sail could cope well with the prevailing south westerlies; thirty or so oars would carry you at a steady five knots, maybe more, in good conditions. The Romans had gone; the fort at Brancaster had been vacated. Sailors from Denmark probing, testing, and exploring found no defensive activity. The land looked empty of people. They saw a few harbours, not hugely different from now; some of them were river mouths, others simply tidal creeks. Anyway, the fact that most of the settlements along the coast have Saxon names tells that this was a land settled by the tribes from North Germany and Denmark.

Nobody knows whether the incomers displaced the few resident Britons or integrated with them; they certainly dominated. Names ending in 'ham' are signs of early substantial Anglo-Saxon settlements. The cluster of Burnhams suggests that here was a large series of communities, occupying the shallow river valley of the Burn. 'Tun' usually means a secondary settlement. So Burnham Norton would be the north farmstead of the settlement; Burnham Sutton lies to the south; Ulph would be the name of a landowner; Overy is over the water, i.e. on the other side of the river, as it indeed is. The western end of the village, as in Westgate uses a Viking word 'gate' for road – but that's a later story. Holkham and Warham suggest other smaller settlements. The river Stiffkey passes through Walsingham, Wighton and Warham on its way to the sea. Fresh water was essential; hence the preference for river valleys. And although Norfolk land never rises very high there is a division marked by a watershed between Norfolk rivers that flow eastwards, notably the Wensum, the Bure, the Blackwater, the Waveney, the Ant and their tributaries and the more modest rivers that flow north and west, such as the Glaven, the Stiffkey, the Wissey, the Heacham and the Babingley, a division subsequently marked by differing kinds of agriculture.

The first arrivals were doubtless armed men – as burials indicate – after which families arrived. The settlement at Wighton had its own cemetery. Overall the population was small, fewer than four men (sic) per square kilometre even at the Conquest. Further west, Wiveton and Morston testify to other early settlements. What did they find these new arrivals? Earlier deforestation going back millennia had left

extensive heathland but there are signs of rectangular field patterns, going back to the Iron Age (between 1200 and 15BC), which may have been replicated in the street plan of Wells, and possibly Walsingham too. Iron Age finds within Wells include evidence of arable farming – a quern to grind corn, and a briquetage to produce salt from brine (found in a dig at the top of Staithe Street). These furlong divisions suggest a degree of cooperation and collaboration amongst the Iron Age peoples.

The Angles do not seem to have favoured Wells; there is no evidence of early occupation (though archaeology is very much a hit and miss business). Lacking a river, they may not have discovered the underground water sources that became so important to the town's future; wells were often associated with pagan places of worship, but nothing emerges about Wells. Growth in woodland suggests a decline in population of the area after the departure of the Romans; this was general; shown by ancient pollen counts identifying plant species. Thus substantially isolated from major areas of incursion, the newcomers seem to have lived in extended family and tribal groups, mostly living in the shallow river valleys of the Stiffkey, Burn and Glaven. Small tribal groups were the norm in the fens; at Wighton the remains of an early embanked enclosure was found in 1974. (They do not appear to have made use of the Iron Age fortifications at Warham and Holkham which, in any case show no sign of permanent occupation but seem to have been temporary refuges.) Sedgeford, extensively excavated, through which the little river Heacham flows, reveals a Saxon cemetery, signs of a water mill and a fishpond as well as ovens, and slag from metal smelting. Debris from the mid Saxon period included Ipswich ware

pottery and oyster, mussel and cockle shells, and a vast quantity of animal and bird bones. (SHARP interim reports 2011-2018. Ipswich ware dates between 720 and 850AD). The Heacham empties into the Wash some way from its mouth and the situation of the settlement is typical of the tendency to settle inland. It was long true that ports tended to be upriver rather than along the coast. The emerging trading ports were York, Southampton, Ipswich and Norwich. ("Wic" means trading port. That Norwich was the northern trading port seems to suggest concentration on more southerly entrepôts).

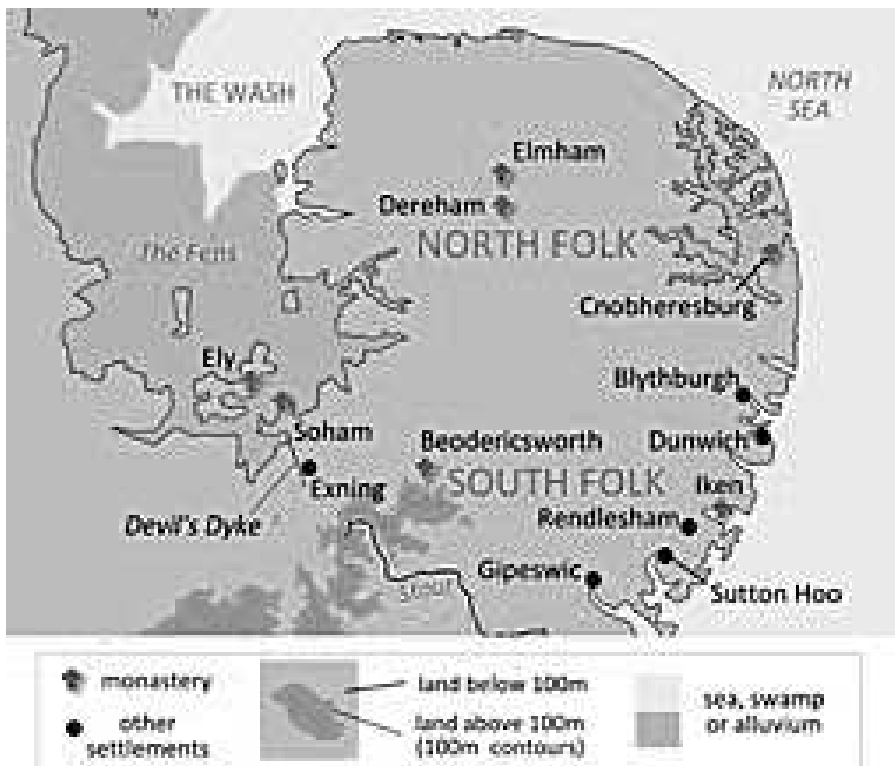
Norfolk was at the north end of a peninsula bounded by the North Sea to the east and at times by the fens to the west. In Roman times it appears that the land between three rivers of the Wash was dry enough to be exploited but that it suffered subsequent inundation making of it an impenetrable barrier from the west. The fens, mosquito-ridden water-logged bogs surrounded by rivers and lakes almost indistinguishable from each other, extended at different times from the Wash as it is at present almost to Cambridge, with Ely as a true island to its north, it was thus highly defensible. Foraging or predatory groups must come either from the south through forest and breck or from the north by sea. This was both good and bad. It limited travel east to west but that meant that any hostile armies from the west, like the Mercians, faced an impenetrable barrier. Thus Penda, the most famous of the Saxon Mercian kings who reigned from 632 to 655 was unable to subdue the East Anglians and his successors were able only to contain but not destroy the kingdom, being able to attack its southerly regions but not the north. The other side of this equation was that because North

Norfolk the northern region of the kingdom was on the way to nowhere, it became marginal.

The first historical figures of any significance were the Wuffingas, a royal dynasty which emerges from legend in the sixth century and whose most notable monarch was Raedwald, king of the East Angles who died in 624 AD. We have the church historian Bede who died in 771 to thank for the earliest descriptions of him. He did not think much of him. However, his kingdom, which continued to flourish in the eighth century, was based not on Norfolk but on Suffolk and Essex. Some say that Raedwald was buried at Sutton Hoo near Woodbridge in Essex. Whoever was buried there, and it is by no means certain, the riches of the grave goods testify to a hugely successful culture and one which operated through trade. Because the ship burial is so important archeologically, and most people know about it, it is assumed to be important in the history of East Anglia.



So far as Norfolk is concerned, it is less so. What the grave goods show is that there were some places of considerable wealth in East Anglia. Gold coins, fragments of chain mail, textiles, fabrics, highly decorated metalwork, spearheads, bronze bowls, a five stringed instrument of music, but its centre was to the south, not the lands of the north folk. The most significant settlement to the north was North Elmham, still some way south.



The seventh century saw the growth in monarchical attempts at dominance. Sigeberht, stepson of Raedwald, who brought Christianity to the region and who retired to a monastery, was dragged back to face the Mercian army in

635 only to be killed in battle. Warfare between the East Angles, the Mercians and the Northumbrians became endemic for the next hundred years. By this time East Anglia had grown from being a collection of disparate, semi-autonomous groups to be a defined political unit. When in the late seventh century tribute was demanded by the Mercian king, Wulfhere, the kingdom was assessed at 30,000 hides or households, compared with a mere 7,000 in what we would call Essex. (The Tribal Heritage [7th Century]). This suggests not only a wealthy part of the country but one inhabited by around 120,000 individuals. Its commercial centre appears, from the origin of coins struck and pottery fragments discovered to have been Ipswich.

How then did Norfolk emerge? It looks as if it was in origin an ecclesiastical division. The conversion of the people to the Christian religion was from the top down. Raedwald, whose conversion while in Kent was doubted by Bede, was among the first. Irish and Frankish monks were admitted to Royal households and monasteries were established. Then in 680AD the diocese of East Anglia was divided into two, one based in Dunwich, the other in North Elmham. Monasteries seem to have been centres not only of devotion but also of social organisation, encouraging different kinds of specialisation around an estate centre. Where earlier tribute was paid to the king, it subsequently devolved on religious houses and later to leading nobles. What organisational structure lay behind the single unit that was the Burnhams we do not know, but it was clearly a single structure covering an area of some 15 square miles.

The same may be true, though less obviously of Wighton, which borders nine other parishes, and which had royal connections. It may, before the coming of the Danelaw, have been the site of a monastery or of a major royal church, such as were known as minsters. We shall never know.

The Dark Ages, covering as they do a period of nearly 600 years are so called because there are so few sources, two or three major written, and not much in the way of archaeology. But in the case of Norfolk, the successive Viking incursions with their adoption of strategies of slash and burn is an additional factor. They left little on the ground. Beginning in 835 the Danelaw culminated in the reign of Cnut (Canute) in the eleventh century and shortly thereafter the Norman Conquest.

Including the reigns of Alfred the Great and Athelstan, kings of Wessex, they form an important part of English history, but to that fascinating story Norfolk makes little contribution. That it emerged as a county, rich in ancient churches, rich in its agricultural produce, centred around the second largest city in the country may have owed something to its comparative isolation and also to what was to become more and more important as ship technology developed, its association with the sea.

Roger Arguile

ROYAL TIDAL HARBOURS COMMISSION COURT

Held at the "Crown Hotel" 29th October 1845

The objectives of the inquiry included looking into the state and condition of navigation at Wells, and what changes had been brought about by the enclosure of lands and building of embankments, and by whose authority these changes had been made. The Commissioner in presiding over the hearing was J. Hume Esq. Local Wells Commissioners who attended included Rev. Valentine Hill, Thomas Garwood, John Chapman, John Hudson, Robinson Parker, John Springall Southgate, James Young, J. H. Parker, John Wiseman, H. Hammond and H. J. Crofts.

The Commissioner said that the government had received very few maps or plans, or indeed any information from Wells about the work that had been undertaken. Joseph S. Southgate, clerk to the harbour commissioners said that there were no other reports available. Mr. Garwood, solicitor to the Commissioners gave evidence about the history of the erection of the embankment by Sir John Turner in 1784, to which the Wells Commissioners objected. This was subsequently removed following litigation in the High Court.

In January 1808 Thomas Wm. Coke, Esq. was given permission to build a new bank to enclose more marshland on the undertaking that he would build a reservoir to safeguard and improve the water flow in the channel. He failed to do what was promised thus impeding the flow of the tide up to Warham, causing silting of the channel, and giving no benefit to the town. The Wells Commissioners

tried to counter the damage done by erecting a dam across the east fleet to give a better scour to the harbour, something that proved ineffective. Mr. Hume expressed his great dissatisfaction with what had been done with these changes. He stated that it was a suicidal act to build the embankments.

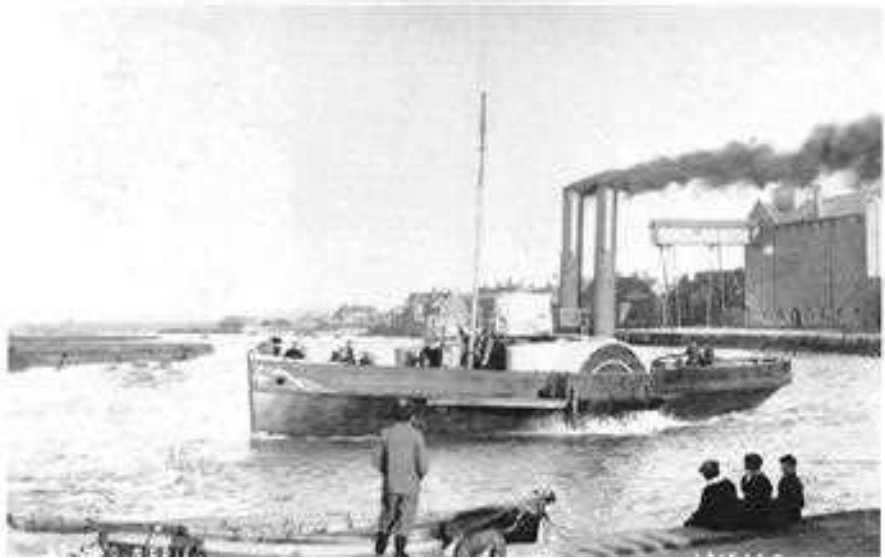
Thomas Garwood, the solicitor then handed over a report by an engineer Mr. Rendel, of the previous year regarding Lord Leicester's wish to enclose the west marshes, claiming a further 580 acres of land. After hearing further evidence "Mr. Hume reprobated in the strongest language that the erection of the embankments by which the back water was destroyed, and said that if Louis Philip of France had as much back water for Boulogne, Cherbourg or Ostend, as they had at Wells, Cley and Blakeney, he would not give it for two millions of money."

The Commissioner then went into the financial dealing of the Wells Harbour Commissioners and was horrified by what he learned. The account books were produced by Mr. Southgate. It was seen that since July 1844 £9650 had been borrowed from the bank at 5% interest, and since then several further large amounts had been borrowed. There were 24 Commissioners who were self-elected, and they audited their own accounts. Robinson Parker said he had never seen any bill for the stone for the new quay. There had been no auditing of the accounts, and when he asked to see them, he was told he could not. He had asked several times to see the books and always different excuses were given for them not being available.

Mr. Southgate went on to say that amounts were paid without any contracts being drawn up and no professional advice had been obtained for the works. There was an amount of £4000 borrowed in 1844, but the account book only showed £600. When Mr. Hume asked what had happened to the difference Southgate's response was "It was paid away." Southgate was then asked by whose authority the amount had been paid and his reply was "partly by myself."

An examination of where this money had gone located a minute in the books stating that it was imperative on three commissioners to sign every cheque before a payment was made. Mr. Southgate, by his own admission had been paying out monies without permission or countersigning of cheques as required. Mr. Dawson, the collector of customs, was then asked by Mr. Hume about the dues collected by customs in Wells, but Dawson had no idea whether the amounts were correctly recorded. No commissioners had shown any interest in the keeping of the account books. One gentleman who had asked to look at the account books was told he could not as they were held in London.

Mr. Hume, the president, then asked about the steam tug purchased for the port. It was originally placed in charge of Robinson Parker but following his dismissal it was placed in the charge of Mr. Southgate. Hume asked why the tug had not been given to Mr. Parker's successor. Mr. Chapman replied that it was considered the Mr. Southgate would superintend it better. When Mr. Hume then asked to see the accounts for the expenditure of the steamboat Southgate told him no separate account had been kept.



Mr. Hume then expressed his feelings about the Commissioners and their administration – “Well Gentlemen, all I have to say is this, that if you are content with these accounts you ought all to be brought up before the Court of the Exchequer.” He then raised a strong objection against Mr. Southgate being clerk, treasurer, superintendent of steamboat, and harbour commissioner all at the same time.

On the question of payment to harbour pilots and charges being paid by the harbour commissioners for their meetings. Mr. Hume said these proceedings were clearly illegal, and they should cease immediately.

Mike Welland

WELLS·NEXT·THE·SEA

Adjoining the Quay and Crofts Yard, &c.

ANDREWS & DEWING

Are instructed to Sell by Auction, at the

**CROWN BILLIARD ROOM, WELLS, on
MONDAY, 20th AUGUST, 1951**

at 6 p.m.

By direction of the Owners (Messrs. Dewing & Kersley Ltd.).

ALL THAT EXTENSIVE BLOCK OF

GRANARIES

extremely well situated with two direct entrances from the Quay to which there is a frontage of 39 feet, and with side entrances from Crofts Yard and Star Yard, the latter having access also to Staithe Street.

The Block comprises:-

- (1) THE MAIN GRANARY substantially built of Bricks with an entirely new Corrugated Asbestos Roof and measuring about 71 ft. x 35 ft.
 - (2) A BRICK & TILED ANNEXE to the South of the above, and measuring about 32 ft. x 15 ft.
- The above Granaries have entrances from the Quay and Crofts Yard and there are large Cellars below.
- (3) A BRICK & TILED GRANARY on the West side of Items 1 & 2, measuring about 71 ft. x 19 ft., communicating with Item 1 and having an entrance from Star Yard.

The total Floor Area is approximately

4000 SQUARE FEET

The Floors are all in good condition.

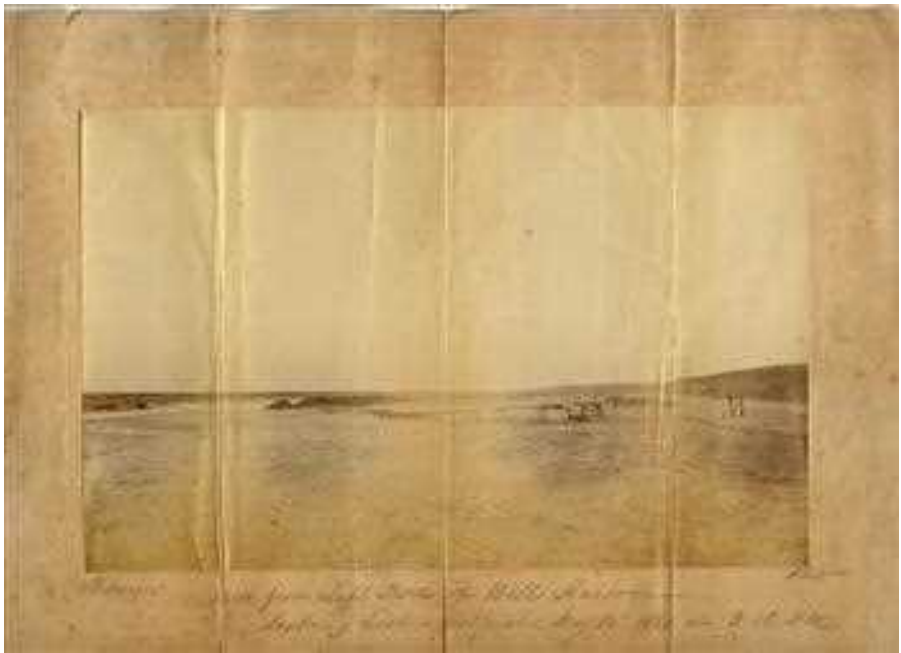
TENURE - FREEHOLD.

The Property will be sold with

Vacant Possession

on completion of purchase.

Further Particulars & Conditions of Sale may be obtained of the Auctioneers, Wells, Norfolk (Phone: Wells 203); or of MESSRS. BUTCHER, ANDREWS & SAVORY, Solicitors, FAKENHAM & HOLT.



The above photograph was donated to us during the winter, and is probably the earliest in our collection, being dated 12th May 1868. The photographer has signed it – J.R.Sawyer. With typical efficiency Mike Welland has traced this name to an Optician working from Upper Surrey Street in Norwich. He suggests, reasonably enough, that the profession of Optician and the hobby of early photography, may well have gone hand-in-hand.

The photo appears to show a wooden pier or walkway erected outwards from the East Bank and is thought to be for fishermen to unload their boats without getting their feet too wet! The posts on the far right-hand side are still in place, and the Harbour Master was not aware of their purpose until he saw the photo.

KL

WLHG Books and DVDs

The following books and discs, published by the group, are currently in print and are available. The first price is for the general public, the second in the concessionary price to members. Members who live out of town may buy post and packaging free, in exchange for the fact that they are generally unable to attend the talks.

Contact:

Nita Spencer, 30a Theatre Road, Wells-next-the-Sea, NR23 1DJ
01328 710501 – jnornita@aol.com

TOWN WALKS: (4 available)

South Route, Central Route, East End Route, West End Route,
£2.00 each, - members £1.50

A SKETCHBOOK WITH NOTES

A collection of the sketches from the above walk books
£2.00 – members £1.50

DVD DISCS (4 available)

- 1) Wells Harbour
- 2) Harbour Disc Two – Beach, Floods, Lifeboats etc.
- 3) Wells Town 1 – Church, Railway, Burnt St., Church St., High St., Polka Road, and School
- 4) Wells Town 2 – Staithe St., Freeman St., Buttlands, Gas Works, Hospital

All the above a collection of old photographs with commentary by Maureen Dye – last between 30 and 40 minutes each
£5.00 – members £4.00

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG LAD – MEMORIES OF WELLS

Reprint of the book by Geoff Perkins – members only - £8.00

WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA – A SMALL PORT AND A WIDE WORLD

Not published by us but selling it on behalf of Poppyland Publishing
Roger Arguile – Paperback Version only - £14.95 -members £12.00

TALKS PROGRAMME

All at the W.I. HALL, Church Plain – all Wednesdays

2020

March 4th 7.30pm Keith Leesmith
HMS Rockingham (Sponsored by Wells in WW2)

April 1st 7.30pm Robert & Liz Scott
Blickling Hall

May 6th 7.30pm Nicholas Vincent
Binham Priory

May 13th 7.30pm
Annual General Meeting & Members' Evening

Next season's meetings will take place on:

2 September, 7 October, 4 November, 2 December in 2020
Plus; 3 February, 3 March, 7 April & 5 May in 2021

The next Newsletter will be published during the late summer