

Wells Local History Group Newsletter



*Some early Wells Regattas
Smuggling in Wells and North Norfolk
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Early Policing in Wells - update
Two Ancient Coaches at Alderman Peel School*

Number 77 – Spring 2021

Like other clubs and societies all over the country, Covid19 and its lockdowns has prevented us from operating our normal talks programme for the last year. However, at the suggestion of Roger Arguile we have now successfully operated two talks via *Zoom* which have been well-received and have attracted people who live well away from Wells, and would not normally be able to attend, unless they are visiting on holiday. There are two more planned – on 7 April – The Early Policing of Wells part II and on 5 May – The 1953 Flood Surge Tide in Norfolk. We also hope to have a *Zoom* AGM on 12 May, probably followed by a short talk, although at the time of writing this is still in the planning stage.

And talking of the AGM, it is time for the usual formal notice asking if you want to nominate anyone for the committee, including yourself, or if you wish to raise any issues to go on to the agenda of the meeting. Please let me have a note of either by the end of April. We will need more committee members. Our constitution states that we have seven on the committee, but we have been running with only six for some time, one of whom has sadly died in the last year, and we believe that at least one if not two of those left would like to retire. Please note that a group like WLHG cannot survive without a few people at the helm who are prepared to plan and run things – in the words of the famous WW1 poster – WLHG needs you!

And lastly an apology. In my article in the last edition on Welsh Drovers, I said that the Wells Little London was situated on Wells Heath. I have now discovered that this is incorrect. It was in fact behind Tinker's Corner in an area roughly bounded by Bolts Close and Standard Road (or Standard Yard as it was then). There is always something new to learn from history!

Keith Leesmith

Wells Early Regattas

Ed: The Wells Regatta, was of course, the forerunner of the Wells Carnival. Please note that these accounts come from newspaper reports at the time, when some language and style was different from today!

Tuesday 12th July 1864

The day of the 1864 Wells regatta was cold and cheerless. As a result, the number of attendees was down on previous years, in fact one of the smallest that could be remembered. The cold was said to be “too much for mortals to cope with”.

A reporter at the regatta stated that he and his party were struck forcibly by the motley groups that they encountered amongst the entertainments on the Quay and elsewhere. Many examples were given, and it is strange to imagine today the sort of activities that they witnessed in Wells on that day over 150 years ago. The “pain that was inflicted on the minds of many rightly – disposed persons” was detailed in the mixture of sounds being heard. These included an Ethiopian group playing with bones and banjos etc. accompanied by their “uncouth yah yahs.” This discordant noise was added to by what was described as “a small band of well-meaning and exceedingly zealous, but very ill judging individuals.” They were singing hymns only a few feet distant from the Ethiopian yah-yah singers. It was reported that they were in effect holding religion up as a butt for the chorus of jeering and scoffs coming from the crowd. Adding to these two groups of noise makers were Mr Cosgrove’s band from Norwich, placed on the Quay, and the drums and fifes of the 11th Norfolk Rifle Volunteers on the opposite side of the channel.

Another fact discovered at this regatta was the amount of petty criminal activity taking place against visitors, and no doubt townspeople attending the event. Incidents were referred to as swindles, but in modern times as mock auctions. One

newspaper reported that it was to be deplored that that the practice could not be checked “for a greater swindle we never saw. In every part of the town these victimisers were at work, it mattered not where one went, and more than once we saw three, all busy pursuing their nefarious practices within an area of four-square yards.” Spectators were offered purses, broaches and watches etc. that promised to give the articles with “current coin to an apparently exorbitant amount. The bait well thrown is often greedily caught at by the unwary, and the dupe finds himself in possession of a trumpery article, and a few half pence, the silver coin having by sleight of hand being conveyed elsewhere.”

Wednesday 12th July 1882

On Monday June 5th, 1882 A well-attended meeting was held at the Crown Hotel to discuss the organising of a regatta in the town, something that had not been done for several years. It had been decided by a number of the town’s leading tradesmen and residents to do everything possible to arrange an event for the coming summer. At the meeting a committee was



appointed, and it was unanimously agreed to hold the regatta the following month, and that arrangements should be made at once. The following Wednesday another meeting was held at the Globe Hotel when E. J. Dewing of Burnham Overy was unanimously elected chairman. In support of Mr Dewing, it was mentioned that he had collected more than £80 for the Lifeboat Catastrophe Fund, and it was obviously felt that he would be able to raise funds for promoting the regatta. The date of July 12th was fixed for the event, with hopes that the combined efforts of the committee would be successful.

It was reported that it has been many years since the town of Wells had been as lively as it was on Regatta day. From time to time the town had seen troubles which had demanded considerable sacrifices from this community, one not particularly wealthy as trade has decayed, property has depreciated due to several circumstances. There were now signs that a change may be coming, and people felt that the new schemes that were being considered would be realised. They were confident that increased trade would benefit all classes and greatly improve the town to a position never before enjoyed.

It is understood that the Great Eastern Railway Company are likely to develop the harbour with works which will avoid the necessity of vessels of deep draught being unable to travel the tortuous channel leading to the Quay. The Earl of Leicester, owner of the extensive salt marshes between the harbour and the sea is understood to have given permission for work to be undertaken to make Wells a more easy and convenient port for loading and unloading vessels. This scheme would include constructing a tramway from the existing station to the Quay, running across the marshes to the deep water harbour a mile distant. It is believed that if the harbour were provided with an improved Quay and a connection to the G.E.R. Company's line by the proposed railway, Wells would draw to itself a considerable increase in shipping trade, which has already

shown signs of increasing. It is also proposed to continue the tramway along the west bank as far as the beach. The distance at present is considered too great for the comfort of visitors. Engineers have begun surveying the marshes, and it is hoped by town's people that the railway company will take advantage of the proposals, construct the tramway, and co-operate with the Harbour Improvement Commissioners in order to increase the trade of the port. Fishermen are also looking forward to these developments, and to the establishment of a fishing depot at Wells.

Inhabitants of the town, depressed by the calamities that had occurred in the past, were buoyant and hopeful in view of the above proposals which could only be for the better, and it was as if anticipating better times and prosperity that it was decided to organise a regatta of such attraction that it should make the town alive with visitors.

Fortunately, on the day of the regatta there was marvellous sunny weather. The G.E.R. Company ran special excursion trains from a number of stations, and many hundreds of visitors availed themselves of opportunity of getting the sea air. On days



like this, and also every Wednesday, the railway company conveys visitors to Holkham Park and Gardens to and from Wells at single fares.

This year's regatta was the first in five years and was arranged by an energetic committee comprised of Messrs E. J. Dewing of Burnham, the chairman, H. A. Dewing, W. S. Andrews, G. Williamson, J. Tilson, J. Brinning, W. Spinks, and honorary secretary G. A. Andrews. Together they raised a fund of about £75 to be utilised for sports events to be held on land and water. They provided a varied programme of events which were carried out most successfully. The Regatta took place in the harbour, with the Quay and the vessels alongside crowded with thousands of people. There was a pleasure fair with Brighton's excellent band adding to attractions of the regatta. Mr. Curson of Walsingham also contributed to the enjoyment by attending with his band. Captain Temple acted as umpire.

The first regatta event was a four-oared rowing competition with a prize of £5. The distance to be rowed was from the harbour to a buoy moored in the channel, a distance of one and a half miles. The *Snipe* (B. Smith jun.), one of four entrants, won by eight lengths. The next event was a pairs match for a cup. There were five competitors, with *Rosalie* (H. A. Dewing) the winner. The main, and regarded as most attractive event, was a yacht race with a total prize of £8. There were four yachts entered, and the committee had arranged that the race would be a distance of six miles, twice over a course from the harbour to the beacon at the mouth of the channel. The tide was at half flood and running strongly with the wind blowing up the channel from the north. After a signal to start the boats departed with outspread sails, but what little progress was made by tacking was lost by the full force of the tide driving the back beyond the starting point. After the wind dropped further attempts were made by the yachts, but the tide was too strong for them to get up the channel.

Other events were meanwhile taking place in the harbour including a swimming match for boys with prizes totalling £1. There was also a swimming and running event for which there were six competitors. The course was a distance of six miles across the marshes, intersected by numerous muddy creeks, and then along the harbour to the Quay. The first prize of 7s. 6d was awarded to T. Woodrow. This was one of two races over the marshes, the winner from eight competitors was T. Arnold. Numerous other events took place in the harbour including more rowing and sculling matches, and swimming events.

That evening activity moved from the harbour to the Buttlands for the land competitions. The area was said to have been thronged with spectators. The principal events consisted of two cycle races, each covering a distance of two miles. The first race was won by J. W. Brown by a margin of fifteen yards, and taking the first prize of £2. He and the second-place getter A. Matthews were both members of the Fakenham Cycling Club. The second race was won by a Mr. Drake. Third place was taken by Mr Cooke, who would have been placed second had he not “taken a cropper” as he was attempting to pass the second-place rider on the fourth lap of the race. He did a complete somersault as he fell and was initially thought to be injured. It was written that “he jumped up with alacrity, remounted his steed, and came in a good third.”

The day finished with a firework display provided by Mr Coe of Norwich, and it was the conclusion of what was considered to have been a very successful day's sport. A small number of police under Superintendent Murrell had little to do as the crowd were very orderly throughout the day's proceedings.

Numerous advertisements appeared in the Norfolk press in the time leading up to the regatta, and the following is an example

THE REGATTA

WILL be held on **WEDNESDAY, 12th JULY 1882**,
commencing at Two p.m., and consisting of
SAILING, ROWING, and SWIMMING MATCHES
Bicycle, Donkey, and Obstruction Races
Tug of War, Walking the Greasy Spar & etc.

Holkham Park and Gardens will be open to the
public

A Display of Fireworks on the Butt Lands in the
evening.

The Great Eastern Railway Company will issue
Excursion Tickets from Norwich, Dereham, Lynn
Hunstanton and all intermediate stations.



Wednesday 8th August 1900

This Annual event took place on Wednesday and was well carried out. The weather of the preceding two days was of a most unfavourable character, and Wednesday opened dull and rainy. Towards noon, however, the heavy clouds dispersed,



and sunshine gladdened the hearts of all. There was a stiff breeze from the N.N.E. blowing down the harbour and bunting which was freely displayed was shown to best advantage. The atmosphere, however, was keen and cold, and had somewhat of a deterrent effect on the competition in the swimming matches. The races on the whole were well contested and afforded the onlookers plenty of fun and excitement. The attendance was not quite equal to that of the previous year, the number of people on the Quay and bank being estimated at about 5,000. The town band under the conductorship of Bandmaster F. Brightmer discoursed a lively programme of music on the Quay in the afternoon, and on the Buttlands in the evening.

There was a decorated cycle parade on the Buttlands for which prizes will be decided. The day's amusements concluded with one of the finest displays of fireworks (by Messrs. C. T. Brock & Co.) ever witnessed in Wells. The first shell was fired at nine o'clock, and the final piece was "Success to our regatta", prettily displayed in a variety of colours. The police arrangements under Superintendent Harvey were all that could be desired.

Mike Welland

Charles Loftus (1796-1883) – Smuggling in North Norfolk

Charles Loftus was the son of a General, and a cousin of the Townsends of Raynham. At the age of 12 he joined the Royal Navy, and after operating in various parts of the world had an accident which resulted in him being invalided out. After a short period of convalescence, he became an officer in the Grenadier Guards, and had a fairly full second career. In retirement he wrote two books: *My youth by sea and land – 1809 to 1816* and *My life from 1815 to 1849*. Despite being hard going in places, these are worth reading, particularly for the descriptions of activities on the North Norfolk coast. His father had a “Raynham” house in Stiffkey, and Charles spent much of his leisure time there. At first, I assumed that this was Stiffkey Old Hall, but he describes one of his neighbours as living in “an old castellated building, with a tower at each end”.

The following (in his words) is a description of smuggling in the area.

NB Before reading this, you may find it worthwhile to re-read Mike Welland’s *Horse Racing at Wells* in Newsletter 65 (Spring 2017) and Christine Hiskey’s “Sheep and Horses” in Newsletter 73 (New Year 2020).

The London season at an end, I went down into Norfolk, to my much-loved home. [Summer of 1817]

I was fond of fishing – we had plenty of trout in the river that ran through the Raynham property, which, in justice to the tenants settled upon it, was well preserved, as well as the game on the estate.

There was little or no poaching carried on our manors, although smuggling was to a great extent at that period, and for many years after, carried on perseveringly all along the Norfolk coast. I believe there were several well-known smugglers in our village. John Dunn, a tall, athletic man, was head of the gang. Whenever a vessel was to run a cargo, these fellows knew exactly when and where it was to be done. Whenever a vessel appeared off the coast with that design, she used to flash off her lights when it became dark, one light indicating one place, two another, and so on in the code of signals by which they gave



notice to their friends on shore where they were ready to land the cargo; and if they did not accomplish this undertaking on the same night, they were pretty sure, weather permitting, to do it the following night. The coast between Wells and Blakeney was most favourable for this sort of enterprise, the beach being low and sandy, while there was little surf breaking on it, except when the wind blew strong upon the land. In those days there was no coastguard, but only certain officials who were called riding officers, whom the smugglers generally managed to elude, deceive, or lead astray. To tell the truth, many of them were themselves believed to be connected with the smugglers.

On one occasion we rode over to Wells races, which took place on the sands, and to show the daring of the smugglers on our

coast, they had chosen this very day to run a cargo on the very beach, where the races were going on. I had observed a cutter standing in and off the



land for an hour or more, but thought she was some yacht bringing people to have a look at the races. My friend's attention and my own were unexpectedly called to a sudden rush upon the beach, where four or five light carts were being furiously driven across the sands towards the shore, to which a number of people were running down. Presently a sort of fight commenced, and the gentleman who was then in command of the Custom-house department at Wells came running and shouting to me and my companion, calling us to come and help, in the King's name, the revenue officers, saying that they were attacked and almost overpowered by the smugglers, who were running a cargo of brandy and tobacco on the beach.

Of course, we could not resist the call to arms, and felt compelled to obey the summons. At the same moment we were fortunately joined by two other gentlemen on horseback, who appealed to me, as I had a little experience in such matters, to know what was best to be done. I said form up into a line and keep line straight with me. We thus trotted along to the fight, which I saw was going on two hundred yards ahead of us. Meanwhile the smugglers on shore had got many of the tubs into their carts and had driven away. Amongst the combatants I saw two or three of our villagers, amongst the rest our principal

baker, who was having a personal set-to with a revenue officer, the latter getting the worst of it. I told my companions to keep their eye on me, and gave the words, "Trot, gallop, charge", and away we went into the midst of the mob, who flew in all directions. The result was that we broke up the assemblage of lawbreakers and saved the revenue officers from a severe thrashing, but the smugglers got away with the principal part of their cargo.

I must add that as I passed our baker in the charge, I gave him a crack over his back with my whip, for old acquaintance sake, and as he had neither coat nor waistcoat, he must have felt it considerably.



In the evening we all went to drink tea at a worthy merchant's, whose name was well known in those days, old Mr. Bloom, where we received praises and congratulations from all our warlike conduct on the field of battle. I could not help laughing at the affair. Four horsemen dispersed the whole mob, but the smugglers got clear off with nearly the entire of their cargo, the preventative officers only capturing six tubs out of the whole. Riding home late in the evening, I turned my eye towards the baker's house. I suppose he had heard my horse's feet coming down the road, for he was watching for me at the door. As soon as he saw who it was, he ran up to me, exclaiming, in quick low tones,

“Mr. Charles! Mr. Charles! Don’t say a word about it. Pray sir, don’t say you saw me amongst them. I think I saw John Dunn driving a cart full of tubs, from what I heard, furiously along the sands”.

“Very well”, I said; “we shall see what will come of it”.

“But Mr. Charles, that crack on the back that you gave me, I feel it now”.



“Well for you”, I said, “that I had no sword in my hand, or your head might have been off”.

“Law sir! Well, Mr. Charles, but you won’t say a word about it, for if the General heard that I was among the smugglers, I might lose all his custom, and be taken before him” (my father being a magistrate).

Fortunately for the baker, Franklin, his name never appeared on the list of summonses, and I heard no more of the affair. It was a daring act on the part of the smugglers to run a cargo at noonday on a crowded beach where races were taking place. I mention to show to what extent contraband goods were in those days conveyed into the country.

One evening, coming home from shooting with the keeper, while we were passing through one of the woods, I put my foot upon what I thought was a lump of leaves. I tumbled heels over head on to something hard. I called out to Billy Betts, the keeper, to come and see what it was. On clearing away the leaves, we found, to our astonishment, a dozen small kegs containing hollands and brandy. Billy Betts, who had been an old man-of-war's man, looked at me, as I did at him.

"Well sir, this is a pretty go", said he.

"What's to be done Billy?", said I.

"I don't know, your honour – you know best". And he took off his hat and scratched his head.

"Whom do you think they belong to?", I asked

"I should not like to say sir – I might be wrong".

"Well, I think I can tell you", said I.

"Who do you think, Captain?"

"Why", I said, "John Dunn, or the baker – perhaps both".

I suppose, as a loyal man, I ought to have given information at once to the riding officer, but I went home to dinner, and Billy, I think, gave timely notice to the owners of the kegs, for there were none to be seen the next morning. This is not the only occurrence of the kind which took place on our coast, and in which our villagers took a prominent part.

Some years after this circumstance, I was coming home late from hunting, having had a long run with Sir Jacob Astley's hounds, when I came



into a lane which led to the village of Morston, belonging to my grandfather. In the lane I came upon fifteen light carts, which were standing evidently waiting for something or somebody.

"What are you all here for?" said I.

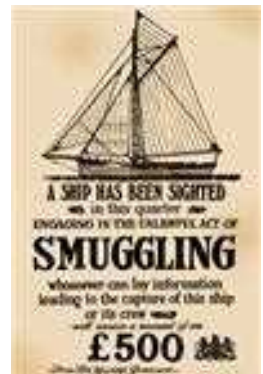
"Waiting for a run sir – we expect to see a flash", was the bold reply.

"What then, is there a vessel off?"

"Yes sir, she's been off and on all the afternoon, and we rather think they've got a hint of it at Cley, and they have three dragoons down there sir, to help the preventative officers. Two of our men have gone down to Cley, sir, to get the dragoons into *The Swan* to drink; and if we catch a preventative officer, we mean to tie him fast in a furze bush. We don't like them dragoons, sir – they've got pistols and swords".

I thought it best to trot home without saying anything, especially as I was hungry and tired, and wanted my dinner. I heard the next day that they had run the cargo with success.

Thus, passed the time of the summer of 1817.



Keith Leesmith

Richard Shackle – Photographer of Record

In 1969 Richard Shackle, who had come to Wells to work for the library service, began to take photographs of the town. The following year he took literally hundreds of them and over the next few years he supplemented them with others mostly of the older parts of the town: High Street, Staithe Street, Newgates Lane, Standard Road; the many yards that ran down the hill to the harbour and to Freeman Street. He took over thirty photographs of High Street alone. He seemed to have had a fascination for front doors.

It was a pivotal moment. The work of modernising the town had resumed after the war, but huge amounts of dereliction could still be seen. The orthodoxy was that old cottages needed to be knocked down. Slum clearance it was called. The work had begun as far back as 1915 when the first council houses were built – on Northfield Avenue. (The original plaque dedicated by the then Earl of Leicester can still be seen on Northfield Lane.) The Northfield estate began to grow. Clearance orders affecting small areas of the town were made in the 1930s; plans for a larger Improvement Area off Freeman Street were laid, only to be interrupted by the war. Afterwards new housing was a priority both on Northfield and elsewhere; private developments were taking place, among other places, on Waveney Close to the south and Southgate Close to the west. But the tackling of the poor state of existing houses and the removal of the many derelict industrial buildings around the town had still to be begun.

Shackle took no pictures of the new developments. Less systematically Betty Tipler, who had moved to Southgate Close on her husband's retirement, did so. What is interesting about the Shackle pictures is that they show the town very much as it had been for a hundred years. To begin with the maltings which



had been closed in 1929 were still in being. Some had found other uses. Thus, the complex of maltings on Staithe Street of which the current *Wells Maltings* is but one part had been acquired in 1935 by Eastern Counties Farmers' Cooperative about

which I wrote a little time ago. The yard was contained by an even bigger building part of whose site is now occupied by Malthouse Place, a block of flats. The firm was based in Ipswich and Wells was at the furthest end of its territory, its activity mostly being the manufacture of animal feed and the supply of seed to local farms. Their farm machinery outlet was in Fakenham. Delivery vehicles of any size could not use Staithe Street to access their yard but Theatre Road and Newgates Lane were not much better. In 1971, just after Shackle began his work Eastern Counties pulled out leaving yet another set of former maltings empty. As the series of pictures here shows, the very centre of the town, yards from the Quay, was characterised by industry with its concomitant noise and dust. Just opposite on Star Yard, next to Walsingham's hardware shop was another malting. Again, another were the buildings on Croft Yard all of which Shackle captured.



The change in the look of the town in the years that followed was dramatic. In some cases, as on Staithe Street there is sufficient evidence on the ground so that it is possible to get some clue as what the town was like. The

architects of Malthouse Place paid small tribute to the former use of the site by including imitation hoists such as were used to haul corn up into the building to be turned into malt on the many floors which



those huge buildings contained. A more conservative exercise was carried out on the huge malting which still fronts the west end of the Quay. It stretched all the way up Tunns Yard and though it has been truncated and replaced by housing its preservation allows people to see how part of the Quay looked



like, full as it was of various trade related buildings. Its survival is probably owed to the fact that it was the last malting to go. Paul's another Ipswich firm lost its premises in that town to its requisition by the government

during war. They came to Wells in 1941 and stayed until 1961 using it for its original purpose. Some people still remember the smell of barley malt in the town and the storage of grain in another former malting, on Beach Road where Pop Inn now is.

In other places nothing is left. The Glebe was the western end of the maltings. Beyond it were the many yards which were shortly to be cleared (and some of them had already been.) The Glebe itself was to be quite transformed. Several single storey





buildings remained in 1970 as Shackle's pictures show. Most were turned over to garages used by Tom Grange's transport business. Grange had been a haulier in the town since the 1920s, surviving the nationalisation of road

transport in 1948 and becoming a major presence in the town himself. He was chairman of the Urban District Council at the time of the 1953 floods. He pulled out of town in 1971. The row of modest town houses which replaced his garages and the funfair which briefly occupied the old buildings gives nothing away about the former uses.

Much changed in the town at that time. As Shackle was taking his pictures the old Urban District Council, whose surveyor Arnold Rogers was intent on modernising the town was abolished and for ten years little happened. Frank Sawbridge, sometime chairman of the new Town Council, commented icily on the lack of new houses in the town in the ten years following the takeover by "Cromer" (NNDC). How the modernisation of the town took place is a story in itself. Shackle's glimpse into what it was like is however invaluable.



Roger Arguile

The Early Policing of Wells – An update to the Autumn 2018 article

This new information has come about as a result of the chance sighting in November 2020 of a Wrench Series 7582 postcard that had been offered for sale by auction from a postcard dealer in Glasgow, Scotland. The additional information provided by the seller in the sales listing, *"Postmark Wells 1904"*, clinched the purchase.



The Wrench Series Postcard

Number 7582

Postmark Wells Norfolk

30th June 1904

(JU 30 04)





At page 11 of my original article (Newsletter 69 – Autumn 2018), I had included a copy of a photograph held by the WLHG in its archives, depicting the Church Plain police station, looking south towards St. Nicholas' Church.

From the limited information held by the WLHG about the picture, I had described it as *“Church Plain in the early 1900s”* and from *“my research to date”* of the constables known to have been resident at what is now 21 Church Plain, *“the three persons seen standing in the doorway of the police house to the left of the station complex are John Spanton, his wife Annie, and step-son George.”*

**PC 42 John Spanton (Wells
Constable 1909 – 1911 pictured at
the funeral of the crew of
SS Heathfield – October 1910**



John Spanton and his family did not move to Wells until his posting from Bacton in October 1909, which was more than five years after the card was posted in Wells. However, the discovery of this documentary evidence has not only identified with some degree of certainty the family seen standing outside the constable's house but provided a tantalising lead into the actual date upon which the original photograph may have been taken in Church Plain.

The Wrench Series postcards were published from 1900-04 by (John) Evelyn Leslie Wrench, and from 1904-06 as Wrench postcards Ltd. The picture postcard of Church Plain was therefore published during that period from 1900 – 1904. Wrench received his first cards (printed by Stengel of Dresden) on 29th November 1900.

Police constable 80 James Hembling was stationed at Wells and living in the constable's house (21 Church Plain) from July 1897 – December 1908 and having been resident in the Church Plain premises for over three years before Wrench received his first cards, there is every likelihood that it is James Hembling seen standing outside the police house with his family.

If it is the Hembling family featured on the postcard then what would be the occasion upon which the photograph was originally taken?



Having enlarged the image, the family are very smartly dressed, and a closer examination of the left lapel of the gentleman featured would suggest he is possibly sporting a white or light-coloured flower, a carnation perhaps?

An article featured in the Eastern Daily Press on Thursday 20th August 1903 may provide the answer to that special occasion

involving the Hembling family – *“Wells – The third wedding in five days was celebrated in the Primitive Methodist Chapel on Wednesday, when the Rev. A. Hebblethwaite united Mr. Edward George Green and Miss Rosa May Warner in wedlock.”*

Rosa Warner is listed on the 1901 census as living at the Church Plain house, being the stepdaughter of James Hembling. James and Emeline had married in Wells on 3rd November 1897, widower and widow respectively. Rosa Warner was the daughter of Emeline from her previous marriage. After Rosa’s marriage to Edward Green, a fish salesman, they lived together in East End, Wells.

The boy seen standing in front of whom is believed to be Emeline Hembling, is her son Reginald Hembling, aged seven in August 1903. Emeline Hembling was a dressmaker by trade and the outfit worn by the lady pictured would certainly reflect that skill set.

Mrs Hembling was mentioned in the subsequent WLHG talk I gave in October 2019 about the early policing of Wells. It was discussed with the members present whether the below photograph of Church Plain (date unknown) could have been taken by local photographer of the time, Albert Mahomet. My attention was immediately drawn to the two ladies stood outside the front door of the sergeant’s house (directly under the lantern) in their particularly eye-catching outfits.

I believe it to be Emeline Hembling stood far right in the light-coloured dress, next to Mary Sands, wife of the sergeant at that time, John Sands.

Sergeant Sands and Constable Hembling served together at Wells police station for five years (1901-1906).

John Sands went on to be superintendent of the Downham Division, as also covered in my original newsletter article from Autumn 2018.



A point to note is the gas lantern that hangs above the entrance to the sergeant's house (now Guella House). It is not a blue lamp as one would perhaps expect to see outside a police station. At a meeting of Wells' Improvement Commission Board on Monday 3rd October 1892, a complaint was made about the need for more light near the police station and the Clerk requested it be ascertained if the County Council would place a lamp at the front of the station.

Steve Adcock

Two Ancient Coaches awaiting their school children passengers at the end of the school day

(One of the last half-cab single deckers in service)



July 1969, two venerable coaches stood waiting, side by side for their school children passengers to make the homeward journey. I was a novice bus driver, having very recently passed my PSV test when at teacher training college in Winchester, and this was one of my first jobs for Carley's of Fakenham, during the summer vacation. I had with me, a college friend, Trevor, who was a bus enthusiast, and was famed in the circles of bus enthusiasts for his collection of photographs and knowledge of buses. My vehicle (the one on the right) was a cream and red Bedford SB, quite an aged example at that time, but Trevor was extremely excited at the sight of the Grey half-cab AEC Regal, that assailed our eyes on us arriving at the school playground.

KVF 262 was owned by Pye's of Blakeney and was obviously well used to the route it was about to follow. The driver was

waiting patiently in the cab, also well accustomed to the children and the route he was about to embark on.

However, trying to discover more about the vehicle and its role has not been easy. Trevor, despite his seemingly unlimited knowledge of buses, was unable to unearth very much, except that it was possibly newly bought by Culling's Coaches, in about 1949-50 and so was approximately twenty years old. I have had to make extensive searches in other areas for information. Facebook has been the most interesting source. Fortunately, there is a group that shares information about Blakeney and its past and several knowledgeable people have shared memories.

Claire S.'s comment

My grandad Eddie Hewitt used to drive this; Lorna Easton will be able to give more info.

Lorna E.'s reply

Yes, my Father Eddie Hewitt used this on the Cley school route he also maintained it. It is an AEC Regal the photo is taken at Alderman Peel School and you can see dad sitting in it. It was owned and parked at Pye's Garage where my dad worked at that time before he went to Cley Garage.

Added to this several other members of this group provided memories they have of this bus.

Liz A. commented -

I remember going to school on this bus, "Smokey Joe" we called it.

Lorna E.'s reply

Yes, it put out plumes when it first started up from cold.

Maggie H. –

Chris Wordingham used to stop outside our house on Morston Road and peep the horn if I wasn't on the bus. Never got away with being late and missing it.

Eileen M. –

Brings back lots of memories, not all good ones, I was on the bus when it was hit by a car & I was thrown out of the emergency exit (it was about 50+ years ago!) But I still have a scar on my arm...

Diane B.-

Remember them well. We called it the picture bus. It also ran in the week think it was on a Monday. Remember George Thompson and Chris Wordingham taking us to Wells school.

Carol A. and John S. –

I am told someone with the surname of Cubitt used to drive it too?

Jack Cubitt aka Hotfoot because of his slow driving speed.

Jackie H.-

Eddie Hewitt, Chris Wordingham, George Thompson all used to drive the Blakeney to Wells school bus. Changed round sometimes. Chris also took the bus to Holt cinema on a Friday night for a 1/- (5p) those were the days.

Further research from sites on the internet resulted in finding a PSV discussion forum who provided the following information: -

KVF 262 was an AEC Regal 9621A with Plaxton C33F body new to Culling's in March 1950. It was sold by them in November 1960 and passed to North Norfolk Garage Ltd (trading as Pye's Garage) of Blakeney. They became R. C. Smith (trading as Pye's Garage) in January 1967. It remained with Pye's (Smith) of Blakeney until it went to Ben Jordan's scrapyard at Coltishall

in November 1970. This must have been one of the last half cab single deckers in service by then.

Nigel Turner



The concluding part of this tale is that the Carley's Bedford that I was driving also had a story to tell from its final journey back to Fakenham. The passengers were from the Walsingham and the Barsham area and the last drop was the bus stop at the bottom of the hill in East Barsham, where the gear lever got stuck in 4th gear. This meant as we were at the bottom of quite a steep hill, there was no chance of moving. A phone call from the convenient red phone-box brought a Landrover with mechanics out to rescue us. A rope was attached to the bus from the Landrover, and the bus, being driven by slipping the clutch, managed to get over the hill and back to the garage, where it sat forlornly, until the scrap-man came when Carley's ceased trading by the end of my summer vacation.

Peter Thatcher

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 is 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

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

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- 1) Wells Harbour
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- 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

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keithnextthesea@gmail.com or write to:
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The next Newsletter will be published around late summer