

Wells Local History Group Newsletter



Holidays in Wells – 1950's and 60's
Frank Buckland – Fishery Researcher

WW2 Decoy Sites in Norfolk

Wells Library

Wells Field Studies Centre 1968 to 2011

Wells Book Society

Wells Underblanket at Norwich Castle Exhibition

Number 79 – New Year 2022

So, the end of another year arrives. And it wasn't a very good one again. We hope that we will be able to resume "live" meetings in March, but we are of course in the lap of the virus. For the time being our meetings continue on Zoom, and with members joining them who do not live anywhere near Wells, we are probably getting a similar number attending as our old live meetings. Because of this we hope to be able to run some sort of hybrid in the future, with meetings held live but broadcast to those living away who would like to participate. It all depends on whether we can solve the technical difficulties.

Another difficulty that we have at present is a lack of committee members. According to our constitution we are supposed to have seven, and for a group of over a hundred members this doesn't seem too difficult. But at present we are managing with five, one of whom is not in the best of health and no longer lives in Wells. This is not just a numbers game; every time we lose a committee member it means that the others must do more to keep the group going. The logical conclusion is that eventually we reach a critical point, and the group will fold. Please help if you possibly can.

I do not have an email address for everybody, and there could be two reasons for this. Maybe you do not have one, but perhaps you have one now but didn't when you joined. If you let me know what it is, I can include you on the list of people who receive monthly emails throughout the season, mainly advising you of the upcoming talk for the month.

For a while I have had a large pile of articles for the newsletter. That pile has now become almost depleted. Please do not leave it just to the "old faithfuls" to fill the newsletter. If you have a story to tell, we would like to hear it – you don't need to be the next Simon Sharma; just tell the story and we will do the rest!

Keith Leesmith

Those were the days

Holidays in Wells, caravan site, boating, swimming, picnics, in the 1950s and 1960s.

This is a collection of family photos from the 60's of our holidays at Wells.



Here is my dad, Harry Thatcher with a “Seagull” outboard motor, on the back of the boat he designed and built, with

myself and brother in a smaller home-made dinghy. In the background on the quay, the fairground rides - dodgems, roundabouts, sideshows of darts and air rifles.

Expeditions around the creeks and across to the East Hills were the favourite destinations with our vessels. In the spring we enjoyed, searching out nests of black headed gulls, redshank, terns, and ringed plovers, by jumping creeks and keeping a watch on the tide, especially so at times of the very high tides, which covered the marshes. We were constantly trying to follow the twisting, turning routes of creeks, being very watchful for hidden piles from long extinct sheep bridges that could have put a hole in the bottom of the boat.



Some years, a daily swim in the channel not far from the lifeboat station was a must, whatever the weather. Then, on return, collecting cockles and winkles from a place we knew well where prize specimens could be found, to be consumed

the next day. Often a “bait” of samphire would be collected from the mud as well.

Picnics with friends on the East Hills, a magical place which I imagined to be treasure island, only able to be reached if you had a boat. Mooring the boat at the end of “gun barrel creek” and keeping a watchful eye on the state of the tides so you still had some water for the return journey. Timing of these events was critical, and



a knowledge of the marshes and creeks was vital.



The first “caravan” we had on the Beach site, was a converted Eastern Counties single decked bus, which had had the engine removed, so had to be towed from the site





at the end of every season. My dad had converted it into a 4-berth caravan which was very well equipped for the time. As can be seen from the trees it was sited the first year after the 1953 floods, before all the trees that were

killed off by the salt water had been felled.

An early view of the Caravan site, possibly in the mid 1950's. Not many cars about and some vans are parked, but not levelled.



Our bus is in the 3rd row back with dad's car standing beside it. The coloured postcard on the cover shows the site at much the same time.

Not too long after the previous pictures, the buses had to go from the site, which seemed very unjust at the time, but



to be fair some of them were not in a very good state of repair. To replace this, we had to buy a more conventional van (on the left of the picture). Many memories of spluttering and popping gas lights, of running across to the (not very nice) toilet blocks with sinks. Wet rainy days playing endless games of cards - rummy, pig, whist, and reading comics. The Eagle, The Beano and listening to the transistor radio.



By this time, we were old enough to go out by ourselves. Dad had built the boats for us to use, and our two very old bikes (standing at the end of the van) were well used to ride around the site, often riding into town, and generally doing our own thing. Many people came year after year as we did, and we soon got to know some of them very well and quickly became good friends.

How lucky we were to have had those opportunities during our childhood. I remember the many visits to the Saturday Matinee, watching films starring Haley Mills, eating fish and chips from Tony Green's fish and chip shop that was situated in one of the many yards, the excitement of the busy fairground on the quayside, and helping Captain Nelson on the boating lakes for a free ride. So many precious memories of moments and experiences I will always treasure and feel very privileged to have known such an enjoyable childhood.

Peter Thatcher



Frank Buckland 1826-80 – fishery researcher

The state of the fish stocks has long been a concern of Wells people. The depletion of the population of various species results in poor catches and lost jobs. For that reason, it is important to predict how much fishing should be allowed and how it should be conducted in order to preserve populations for future generations. In this scientists have had an increasing if controversial role. This goes back some time. In relation to Wells the name of one man stands out: that of Frank Buckland, surgeon, naturalist, lecturer, and investigator. Born in 1826 in Oxford, the son of the canon of Oxford cathedral his brief career in medicine led him to take a wide interest in the natural order. In this he followed his clergyman father who, like many of that profession in the nineteenth century, concerned himself with scientific issues. In fact, both of his parents did so. His father was a palaeontologist; his mother collected fossils.



Frank Buckland

Buckland was more interested in the present than the past. In particular he was interested in the animal kingdom as a source of food. The nineteenth century had seen a massive rise in the country's population and the growth of the network of railways. Fish a perishable commodity had once been available only in its smoked, dried or salted form and was scarcely available far inland. Trawling, a comparatively new and unselective form of fishing was bringing in a larger range of species which longshore fishermen claimed was destroying fish stocks and hence their livelihood. In 1860 a Royal Commission was set up

which agreed that it was important that 'fishery statistics should be systematically collected'. Enter Frank Buckland, who was appointed to the Home Office as inspector of Salmon Fisheries for England and Wales. Soon it was realised that there was no information of the state of the sea fisheries more generally, the result of which was that Buckland's remit was extended. He was commissioned to produce a number of reports on fisheries throughout the country, both inland and at sea. The report for Norfolk being published in 1875.

Somewhat of a maverick he undertook his examination of the Fisheries of Norfolk alone. He held enquiries at the various towns along the coast as well as inland. He came to Wells, reporting some of his conversations. He spoke to Richard Smith, pilot, fisherman, master of the steam tug and coxswain of the lifeboat who said that there were no edible crabs or lobsters, but that there were 'hook fish' in winter; there were cockles, clams, a few shrimps, few whelks, and few razor



shells. Trawling had been discontinued recently though eight years previously (1867) there had been three or four smacks which caught soles, brills, thornbacks and butts [flatfish]. Hugh Rump, local surgeon, reported to him that numbers of cod, haddock and skate, all previously caught had diminished. Oysters, which had been abundant 20 to 30 years before had disappeared. Mussel beds had been washed away by strong tides, but there was an abundance of cockles particularly between Wells and Stiffkey.

The result of his report was the making of a number of recommendations which resulted in the Norfolk and Suffolk Fisheries Act of 1877. Among other things he recommended closed seasons and minimum sizes for certain fish and crustacea; he also recommended minimum net sizes for shrimp and fishing nets, and that a sieve should be employed to exclude smaller sizes when fishing for whelks. He recommended the return to the sea of undersized creatures and of those carrying eggs. He also made comments about cruelty in the killing of crustacea. Almost all his recommendations have been superseded but his was the first attempt to combine biological details of the lifecycle and feeding habits of various fish with local reports of fishing practises. His was also the first official statement of the dangers of overfishing. Academics before him had claimed that the resources of the sea were inexhaustible. He wrote by contrast 'Vast as are the resources of the sea, yet it is possible that modern appliances and want of scientific cultivation for fishing may draw too much upon the general stock in certain localities. '

In many respects he was over-reliant on hearsay and his scientific knowledge was not always correct. His opinion about the location of crabs and lobsters was however widely shared.

His view that they were not to be found off Wells was echoed as recently in the government report of 1966 which had reported that the only worthwhile crab fishery was between Weybourne and Mundesley, a view now certainly known to be false. He was however interested in how new fisheries could be found and how stocks could be sustained. For that reason, his comments on the crab and lobster fisheries to the east of Wells are of interest now.

The invention of the crab pot in the 1860s had transformed that fishery. As described, they were not much different from those in use today. His comments on the need to avoid taking undersized crabs were to become the source of legislation; he commented that over 28,000 of such creatures had been landed at Sheringham in one day. He estimated that the three quarters of a million crabs captured to a value of £500 would have produced an income ten times greater if caught the following year. Boiling crabs from cold he considered a horrible cruelty. They should be killed with a steel awl immediately before cooking he thought. Lobsters should be placed in boiling water.

As before he noticed the wastage of young fry demanding that 'berried' lobsters, those carrying eggs, should be returned to the water. He would no doubt have approved of the recently established lobster hatchery in the Wells Fishery Shed.

He died only five years after the publication of the report but after his death an endowed professorship was created so his views and subsequent researches would be widely known. The results of his investigations raised issues which attempt to ensure a sustainable fishery into the future.

Roger Arguile

WW2 Decoy Sites in Norfolk

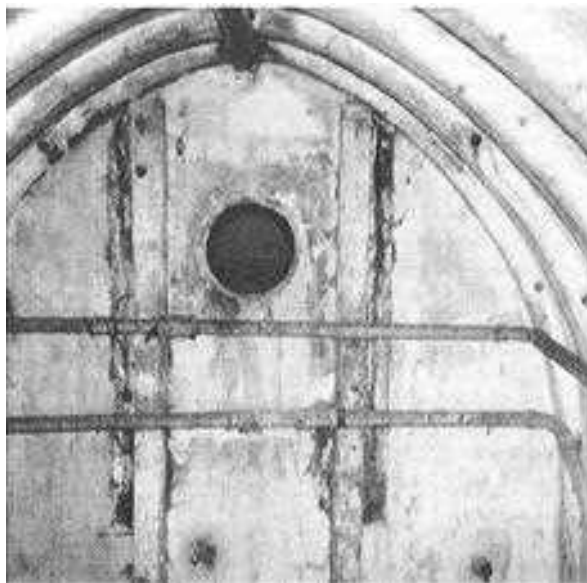
You will know that once Britain had gone to war in 1939, everybody seemed to become involved in some aspect or another. Many technological advances took place during the conflict, not least Radar, and early computer science at Bletchley. And these are just the “headliners”. Less spectacular, but just as important, were the filmmakers, artists, and technicians who were recruited to use their existing skills to confuse the enemy. Inflatable tanks in North Africa were used to make Rommel’s lot think that the 8th Army were in places that they were not, and to confuse them into using valuable ammunition to shell the wrong positions. Similarly, Britain’s airfields gained a certain amount of protection from the Dummy Airfields that were constructed to help to protect them. Because there were so many airfields in Norfolk, many of the dummies were also here.

As an example, Bircham Newton had been a WW1 airfield, and so was one of the first to be ready to operate in the second conflict. A dummy airfield for it was established just a couple of miles away at Docking. At this site, a large flat area, model Hudson and Hurricane planes were arranged as if ready to fly. Canvas sheets were pinned down to the ground and painted to resemble the roofs of hangars and other airfield buildings. Fake runway lights were installed to use at night. The whole impression from the air being that the dummy airfield would look like the real thing. During night flying, allied aircraft would often be followed back to their base by the enemy. The idea being not just to attack the aircraft, but also the base from which it had flown. So, the procedure was that as soon as the plane touched down, the home base landing lights would be switched off, and those at the dummy airfield would be switched on. Thus, if any attack took place, it would occur in open farmland where it would do little or no harm. And it worked on many occasions.

The trouble with Docking, however, was that it was a large flat area, which made it ideal when the Air Ministry were looking for more places to site new airfields. Docking rapidly became a new grass airfield, originally as a sort of annex to Bircham Newton, then as an airfield in its own right. So, a new dummy airfield was now required. Suitable large flat areas were searched for and one was found at Egmere (don't get ahead of me), where a dummy airfield was established towards the end of 1940. So, for a couple of years, the fields at Egmere operated as a decoy for RAF Docking, until it too was converted to a real airfield, becoming RAF North Creake in December 1943. It did take nearly another six months before it became operational, with 199 Squadron arriving in May 1944, just in time for D Day.

By this time, the allies had the "upper hand" as far as daytime operations over Britain were concerned, and that is presumably why RAF North Creake did not have a dummy airfield to itself. Or perhaps it was thought that there was nowhere suitable. Because in the middle of 1944 a "Q" site was built on the edge of the Warham Marshes, half-way down Garden Drove. There were two types of decoy sites; "K" sites, which had the imitation aircraft and buildings, to confuse the enemy during the daytime, and "Q" sites which were just for night use with imitation landing lights. The Warham site was to protect RAF Langham. Three airmen shared the job of looking after the place, cycling from Langham and spending 24 hours alone until relieved the next day.

The site was quite basic, having just one building split in two halves, one to house the operator and their equipment, and the other containing the generator to power the "landing lights". They were in telephone contact with the control tower at Langham and would be informed when their aircraft took off, and when they were expected to return. On one occasion the Warham operator realised that Langham Beaufighters were circling his dummy field with the intention of landing. A quick



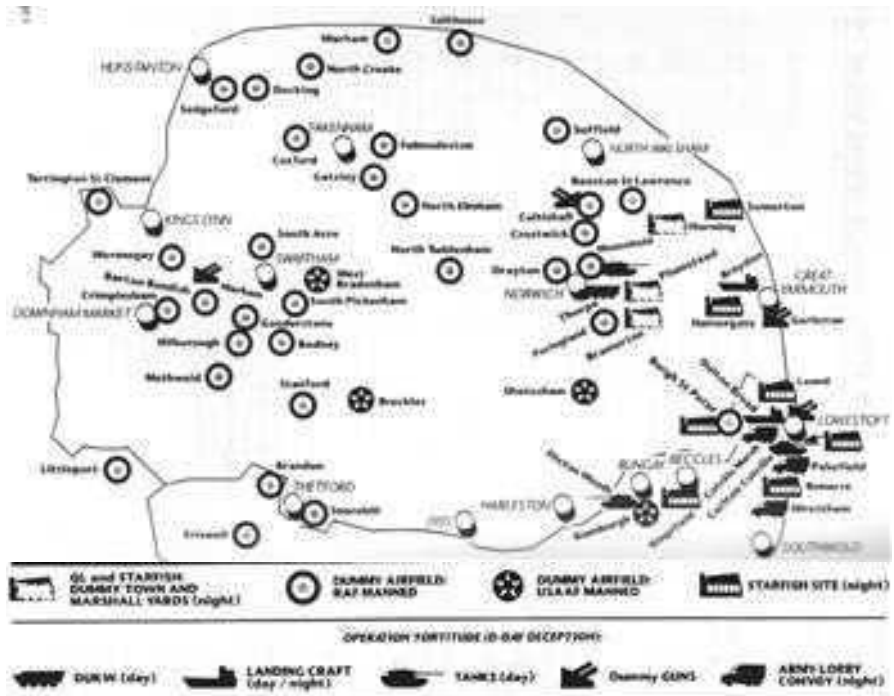
WARHAM "Q" AIRFIELD
BUNKER GENERATOR ROOM.
Showing arched construction
of preformed concrete.
Top: 15" exhaust duct
Middle: water pipes that fed
water from the outside tank to
cool the generators.
Bottom: two pipes from the
outside fuel tank to the
generators.
*Photograph courtesy of
Tony Vine (1996)*

conversation with the Langham Controller gave him orders to "black out" the site. Presumably this shows that the dummies were quite effective. Apparently Warham, unlike some other places, never did get bombed by enemy aircraft, much to the relief of the personnel attached to it.

As well as the dummy airfields, there were also "Starfish" sites that were intended to protect either towns and cities, or important locations such as railway marshalling yards. There were Starfish sites at Bramerton and Plumstead to protect Norwich and Burgh St Peter and Somerton to protect Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. On these sites burning tanks of oil simulated successful bomb drops, and from the air mock trains could be seen moving about as well as chinks of light to simulate bad blackout.

At the end of the war, it was calculated that the Starfish sites (nationally) had been bombed about 100 times, which was thought to account for about 5% of the bombs intended for "real targets" It was thought that the sites had probably saved about

2500 lives, in exchange for the 4 deaths that occurred when people working at the decoys perished. Decoy airfields were probably even more effective. Nationally, they had been bombed 443 times, as opposed to 434 attacks on operational airfields.



With much thanks to Huby Fairhead and the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum for the illustrations and much of the information in this article.

Keith Leesmith

Wells next the Sea Library.

The library was opened in September 1949. It had previously been located at the town school which, it was said, was no longer desirable.

The following details regarding the history of the building are extracted from a newspaper account and the speech given by Mr. A. Cozens-Hardy; chairman of the Library Sub-committee of Education when opening the library.

The building in Station Road was once a Wesleyan chapel. It was disused for many years, and during the war used by the Fire Brigade as a recreation room. Mr. Cozens-Hardy said that when John Wesley visited Wells during his Norfolk tour, in October 1781, there was a reference in his journal to a sermon he preached in a "small, neat preaching house". Some support for the belief that this house was the Wesleyan Chapel was given by the fact that the keystone on the building bore the date 1759.

He then stated that – "We are afraid, however, that this pleasant theory has been shattered by a careful enquiry into the facts recently made by Mr. Percy Millican of the Norfolk Record Society. He has discovered that on the site of the present chapel in 1745 was a public house owned by a Wells blacksmith named Henry Beeting. It was soon sold to a man named Cullin, whose son changed the name of the house to the "Rose and Crown." Cullin died before 1808, and in that year the property came into the hands of Thomas Dewing, a miller of Little Walsingham. On April 5th Dewing purchased a piece of land adjoining, and on the same day the Rev. William Gilpin, a Wesleyan minister of Little Walsingham, was assigned a mortgage of 1000 years on the

whole property and became chief negotiator on behalf of the Wesleyans.” On June 24th, 1808, the first trust deed was executed, and the property is described as “that newly erected building intended to be fitted up and used as a chapel.” It goes on to stipulate that the minister appointed shall use no other doctrine than is contained in John Wesley’s Notes upon the New Testament. Cozens-Hardy then went on to say the date on which the deed was executed is significant because not three months had elapsed since the assignment of the mortgage to the Wesleyans. Therefore, the chapel must have been the result of alterations to its predecessor the “Rose and Crown.”, and not an entirely new building. It is reasonable to assume that the façade of the old building was retained with its date 1759 on the keystone. On this evidence it is certain that John Wesley never preached in the present building, and it is most unlikely that he preached in the “Rose and Crown” in 1781 when he visited Wells.

I find several problems with the above account. In view of the research done by Millican, presumably from original documentation, it seems that there was a public house on or near the site at some stage. There are problems with parts of the time scale in the comments by Cozens Hardy. Firstly, there are no records of a licensed property named “The Rose and Crown” in Wells in any of the licensing records between 1789 and 1789. Does this indicate that the public house closed before 1789, as several did in the town? Although the parish records do not contain a reference to Henry Beeting there are records of the Cullin families, those of William and Thomas. In the 1793 census one family was resident in Church Plain the other in Red Lion Yard. I was therefore unable to link a Cullin to the site of the chapel which was unfortunate.

The text of the deed states that the chapel was “newly erected and was to be fitted up and used as a chapel”. Cozens-Hardy assumes that the façade of the old building was retained, but the façade of the chapel is inscribed as such, and clearly was purpose built and not part of an earlier building.

There is a possibility that the early public house stood on the vacant site to the west of the chapel seen on the early picture below, and that the chapel was built on what is referred to the land adjoining on its east side.

Mike Welland



Archive Room News

When the first lockdown arrived in March 2020, amongst other activities it stopped the planned regular opening of the WLHG archive room in the Wells Maltings. A little work was managed during the various breaks in lockdown, but we have not yet resumed routine openings. Instead, we are responding to requests left at the Maltings information desk to meet people to assist them with their research.

Committee member Peter Jefferys has taken over the running of the room, whilst Bob Brownjohn continues to work on indexing the various computer items from his room in the nursing home in Sheringham. He supplies us with an update to the system at regular intervals.

We have been given an extensive archive of research into Martha Rust; her family and businesses, collected over many years by former member Maureen Whiddett. This will prove invaluable to future students of Martha's extensive contribution to the town.

We also have two large cabinets full of hundreds of slides taken at the former Field Studies Centre in the Polka. Because they are so large, it is not our intention to keep these permanently, but we intend to digitise them. Copies will then be kept in the archive room, and also supplied to the Norfolk Archive Centre and to Christine Marshall, the former head of the Centre, who has kindly supplied them.

Keith Leesmith

Wells Field Studies Centre 1968 to 2011

Norfolk County Council Education Department opened Wells Field Studies Centre (WFSC) in 1968. At that time the North Norfolk Coast was becoming recognised and officially designated by the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) as an important place for unique ecosystems and species and in danger of harm from tourism, development, and further agricultural land reclamation. It was the intention of the Education Department that the towns recently emptied former primary school should become a residential field studies centre, so that Norfolk school children could stay there, study the area, grow to love it and take their part in protecting the coast. The centre was staffed and equipped to lead and facilitate that process. The centre was self-catering enabling maximum socialisation and skills learning. It accommodated 36 children and 4 staff.

The opening programme and brochure for the Centre and many photographs are deposited in the Norfolk Records Office with black and white photographs of the centre. Miss Christine Speed set up the centre and its first Warden was teacher Paul Banham, who was assisted by his wife Eleanor with her additional teaching support and centre administration. They lived at the top of High Street behind the centre, and both worked there for 20 years until their retirement. Mrs Lois Overton was the second caretaker for many years and lived on site with her husband Alf who assisted her as necessary.

The Banhams were amazingly gifted people who turned their hands to every and anything. Paul was a natural historian photographer, and film maker, heraldry expert and a true Norfolk man. He also was one of the first in the country to introduce microcomputers into the field work classroom for analysing fieldwork data. Eleanor was an artist and historian who made a speciality of local history fieldwork in the town, mapping the age

of houses and creating a range of teaching resources to study Warham Camp, Binham Priory, history of English architecture, churches and so on. She photographed a lot of the housing in Wells at a time of rapid change and demolition. Two colour reel to reel films made by Paul about studying the salt-marsh and the pinewoods are housed in the East Anglian Film Archive.



Under their care and innovation WFSC became very well known in the country as a centre of excellence and other authorities emulated the use of closed rural schools. There was a flourishing in the 1960's and 1970's of such centres as the conservation imperative was finally being recognised. Paul Banham was a founding member of the National Association of Field Studies Officers (NAFSO) established in conjunction with the NCC to provide mutual professional support and good practice sharing with colleagues working in similarly isolated centres around the country. He remained active with NAFSO until retirement having organised both national and mini conferences for the Association.

In 1989 it was my good fortune to become the new Head of Centre (then Christine West) just at the time the National Curriculum was being brought in necessitating a close look at what was on offer at the WFSC and how that might need to change. The centre was still free of charge for students at that point. I photographed many slides of the centre as I took it over and the visitors who came to stay and study. There are some of local people who helped us. Mostly primary aged children and A' Level groups studying Biology, Environmental Science, Geography and BTEC Science feature. There are a few of Cambridge Zoology and Geography Department staff and students who used the centre every summer for extended stays/research over many years. Many teachers' courses were also run.



Under me, the centre focused on sustainability in addition to natural history as the focus switched to the problems of climate

change and biodiversity loss, but town history and geography were still taught in a cross curricular way including poetry, art, music, role play and so on. Staff obtained Eco Centre status and there was a celebration, and the flag was presented by Lord Coke. There was also the Gates and Gardens Project undertaken with Pat Willis, centre neighbour and artist. Both the towns' schools submitted designs for the gates which blacksmith artist Bill Cordaroy of East Ruston turned into those there today, featuring geese over the salt marsh creeks and a school of fish. We also engaged in carnival events run by the centre staff and an innovative course for Gifted and Talented Children combining Howard Gardiner's principles of Multiple intelligences with the Sustainability Theme of Food.



We recorded ecological landscapes and species in the Wells vicinity. While these may seem of irrelevance to an historian; to an environmental scientist, geographer and ecologist they are pure gold to assess the impact of environmental change. They were also the bedrock of what WFSC was established to do so

no historical record of the work of WFSC in the town is complete without them.



Open Day and celebration photos were often snapped by centre neighbour Colin Rattee, and these are in the Norfolk Records Office alongside a number of others taken over the years, press cuttings, logbook and so on. Staff at WFSC were also very involved with NAFSO and organised a conference for 200 colleagues in Norwich in 2001. Documents pertaining to this are in the Records Office as well as records of the range of courses taught at WFSC, teaching materials, children's work, letters of thanks, various brochures and so on. The Norfolk Archive Centre are still working on Sir Lincoln Ralph's papers (former Chief Education Officer) and his contribution to education in Norfolk, of which WSFC was one. They appreciated the significance of the work of the Centre both, nationally as well as locally and the record of it.

Over the course of the years Norfolk County Council reduced annually the budget to the centre and much work was done to raise income while keeping the centre affordable to those who wanted to use it. The Environmental Education Service was put under great financial pressure and as staff left, they were not replaced. Thus in 2006 I also became responsible for Holt Hall Study Centre and so my ties with Wells were reduced. My long-standing colleague Andrew Coles and I job shared the post of Heads of both Centres and Nell Seal joined the team as Lead Teacher at Wells, supported by Andrew. By this time photography was of course all digital. Records of her teaching and local photos are all digitised on CD rom in the Archive centre.



In 2011 Wells Field Study Centre was closed despite fierce opposition. It had survived many threats but a cost cutting, and political decision had been made and despite Dr Marie Strong fighting alongside many others, Lisa Christensen Chief Education Officer decided to advise councillors to shut it. The

EDP had coverage. The money saved was supposed to go to save Holt Hall. Holt Hall became a victim of closure in 2020. Just as the Local Education Authority Field Studies Centre movement grew in the 60's and 70's it unravelled in the 2010 – 2020's. Local Government cuts decimated provision of high-quality specialist teacher led and equipped field study centres. NAFSO is no more, with just 13 staff from field centres represented by a small group subsumed within the Institute of Outdoor Learning. The history of LEA Field centres is worth remembering as they set the standard and were responsible for engendering a lot of environmental awareness and respect as well as memorable experiences away from home which were life changing for some.



This is a necessarily brief potted contextual history. Should you require any further information about the Wells Field Study Centre which operated for 43 years then please do contact me.

Christine Marshall

Wells Book Society – 1821

On Monday last was held at the Fleece Inn the fourth anniversary of the Wells Book Society. The successful progress of that institution, and the very flattering encouragement it has already received, afford ample assurances that it will one day become a prominent feature in the ornaments of our county.

It at present numbers among its members our worthy representative Thos. Wm. Coke Esq., Thos. Bolton Esq, Sir Wm. Bolton, the near relative of our ever-to-be admired and lamented the late Lord Nelson, the Rev. Archdeacon Bathurst, the Rev. Dr Laughton, Chaplain to the King, the Rev Richard Odell, John Bloom, Esq., Capt. James Bloom, with nearly forty gentlemen of the first character and distinction in the town and neighbourhood. After a most excellent dinner, at which the Rev. Odell presided, with Mr. James Young, his vice-president, were drank many popular and literary toasts which were enlivened by the captivating and classical eloquence of the Rev. R Odell, by the energetic and argumentative appeals of the Rev. Dr. Langton, by the able and interesting observations of Mr. Young, by the sprightly wit and acute reflections of several other gentlemen, all of whom appeared desirous of contributing to the rational and literary festivities of the day. It was truly “the feast of reason, and flow of soul”. Mr. Grisenthwaite was unanimously voted to be Vice-president for the ensuing year, an honour for which he had once before declined. Among the health’s drank were those of Mr. Coke, the Rev. Archdeacon Bathurst, Mr. Bloom, Mr. Young, Vice-president the Rev. Mr. Upjohn, the Rev. J.D. Crofts, Rev. John Ackroyd, Mr. Grisenthwaite, Vice-president elect, Mr. Geo. Crofts, Librarian and Treasurer, who severally returned thanks, with many appropriate observations excited by the occasion.

Wells, April 3rd, 1821

Mike Welland

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:

Steve Adcock – kadcock@talk21.com 07455 893114

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 by Hew Purchas
£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

THE WELLS MURDER OF 1817

Revised edition by Mike Welland £5.00 members £4.00

THE HOLKHAM MURDER OF 1851

Brand new! By Mike Welland £3.50 members £3.00

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

Norwich Castle Textile Treasures Exhibition

Peter Jefferys and his wife have recently visited the above and were very impressed with it. The exhibition continues until 20 February 2022.

Amongst the treasures on display is a patchwork underblanket made by Mary Martin of Wells around the year 1900. The following is the showcard which accompanies the piece, and a photograph of the underblanket itself.



Peter has done a bit of research and found the following: The craftswoman's full name was Mary Emma Martin and was born in Burnham in 1865. She married Robert William Martin, a tailor, around 1892 and they lived with his parents in Honeymoon Row. They had two children – William Martin, born around 1893 and Edith Annie born in 1895. She was widowed in 1901 and then took charge of the tailoring business at 20 Church Plain. In 1911 her son was an auctioneer's clerk and there are photos of him in the Wells Football Team in the 1920's. The daughter, aged 16 in 1911 was an assistant in "wool fancies".



Remarkably Mary Martin, still at 20 Church Plain, lived until the age of 85, dying in 1950

A photograph of the underblanket taken by Peter Jefferys

The Castle Museum Norwich is acknowledged and thanked for the reproduction of the showcard on the previous page.

Are you interested in Wells History but not yet a member of Wells Local History Group?

We have over a hundred members, about half
living locally, and the others coming from
all over the country

Membership is £10 per annum
or £15 for two at the same address
(Couples share a newsletter)

Benefits include three of these newsletters each
year, a programme of talks from September to
May, plus discounts on our published books and
DVD's

If you are interested contact the secretary:
keithnextthesea@gmail.com or write to:
WLHG, 31 Dogger Lane, Wells-next-the-Sea NR23 1BE

The next Newsletter will be published around Easter