

Editorial

Welcome to issue 8 of *The Glaven Historian*. No archaeology in this issue – which might come as a relief to some of you – but a distinctly *natural* history flavour to a couple of pieces; John White is a well-known dendrologist who has used his skills to demonstrate just how ancient some of our trees are – and that is just the ones that are still standing, still growing. The related discipline of dendrochronology has been of tremendous value in calibrating radio-carbon dating technology, thereby greatly increasing its precision. By the use of these techniques it is possible to date the, still living, great Bayfield Oak to 1346, and from that to surmise that it was in all probability self-seeded at a time when the human occupants of the area were rather too preoccupied with the Black Death to worry about oak saplings appearing in their midst.

Other flora (and fauna) in the Glaven Valley have long attracted attention, both academic and mercenary. An example of the former is the laboratory set up at Blakeney Point by Professor F W Oliver on behalf of the Botany Department of University College, London, as recounted by Dr Donald White.

We return to our familiar maritime theme with Jonathan Hooton's portrait of the schooner *Minstrel*. Though no doubt the mariners of the day cursed it as red tape (the expression existed in the 19th century having been coined by Dickens, and popularised by Carlyle) the improvements to official record-keeping through the Victorian period has made the life of maritime historians much easier, as has the invention of photography. All these resources have been brought to bear on the creation of this "biography".

One of the cornerstones of local history research in the Glaven Valley is the amazing collection of notes and transcriptions gathered together by the late Kenneth Allen who is remembered in this issue in an appreciation written by his old friend Ronald Beresford Dew. The Allen collection is in the Norfolk Record Office, but, thanks to the generosity of Professor Dew, a duplicate set has been lodged in the History Centre, Blakeney.

Pamela Peake has complemented the Allen Appreciation by delving into the history of the family in Blakeney. Arriving in the middle of the 19th century, the Allen family seemed to spe-

cialise in Innkeeping and Blacksmithing. Pamela Peake puts the Allen family into its context among the other innkeepers and blacksmiths who served the community into the 20th century.

Often a very small and seemingly insignificant find can lead to a much wider investigation. Richard Jefferson was sufficiently intrigued by his accidental "discovery" of the graves of three servicemen, washed up on the beach near Cley within days of each other in June 1940, to delve into where they had come from and how they came to be there. His investigations led him to the reports of the sinking of the HMS *Princess Victoria* a month earlier, the graves of other crew members along the North Norfolk coast, and eventually to contact with two survivors of the sinking. It also seems that, in the fog of war, identification of bodies washed ashore was not quite as scrupulous as it might be today.

John Peake, likewise intrigued by the 15th-16th century graffiti of ships to be found – if you are sufficiently diligent – in several local churches, has used a survey of 1565 as the basis for a look at the life of the Haven and its people in the 16th century. This 1565 Survey is a quite remarkably detailed document which, together with other surviving documents such as with Wills and Inventories, enables the local historian to build up a good impression of the economic life of our forebears 450 years ago.

The Back Pages have expanded slightly to accommodate a work in progress, the survey of Cockthorpe church. Frank Hawes and Pamela Peake are arranging for a group of BAHS members to make a survey of All Saints, a delightful, if redundant, local church. It is small enough for this not to be a lifetime's work (we hope) but varied enough to sustain interest. The project will look at more than just the fabric of building but has started with a Survey of the structure. The monumental inscriptions have also been recorded – more next time.

A topical note, given the recent General Election, is struck by Monica White who has dug up a report of how election campaigns were conducted locally almost a hundred years before the first Great Reform Act. The hustings in Holt must have been not unlike those depicted so graphically by William Hogarth, and in Thomas Love Peacock's *Melincourt* – our parliamentary democracy has come a long way since then, but, many would argue, still has a long way to go.