

SMHS JOURNAL 18

THE ANNUAL MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHWOLD MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY
JUNE 2018



George Gage—a very genial ‘mine host’

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The Crown Hotel visitors book reveals a theatrical guest

Nazi plane lands at Covehithe

The Southwold Murder Trial

Researching your family history

Southwold’s property ‘gold rush’ 1900s-style

Sad recollection of May 1943



SOUTHWOLD MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL
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EDITORIAL

I am sure members will agree that the transformation of the appearance of the 17th issue of our Annual Newsletter really brought us up to date with modern methods of production which have taken a steady leap. The publication was a credit to the SMHS but particularly to Barry Tolfree who not only offered to help, but master-minded what we saw as the result.

In this 18th issue there are contributions from six members on a variety of topics. My thanks to them for their help and support. I hope you enjoy reading their work.

DO YOU HAVE A LOCAL HISTORY PROJECT JUST WAITING TO BE RESEARCHED?

We'd love to have the opportunity to publish it in the 2019 issue of SMHS Journal.

Remember the Museum library and archive is open to Members every Thursday afternoon from 2.00pm (and at other times by arrangement) when our archivist, Bob Jellicoe is in attendance to provide help and guidance.



GEORGE GAGE & THE CROWN HOTEL

Readers will have noticed that, this summer, the museum's street window is dressed with a display of photos, documents and artefacts from the late 19th century, all relating to one George Gage. Jenny Hursell explains the fascinating story behind them.

The Gages were a well-known family of hoteliers in Lowestoft and north Suffolk, Henry Gage being proprietor of The Crown Hotel which stood on the corner of the High Street and Crown Street in Lowestoft. He had a son, George, born in 1865 at Mutford who in the 1881 census is recorded as being 16, single and a butcher in Crown Street. On Monday 12th September 1881 auctioneers, Messrs Lenny & Smith, listed The Crown Hotel in Southwold High Street for sale at the same time as The Queens Head, Bramfield, and Henry Gage decided that The Crown, advertised as "A Freehold Commercial and Family Hotel with spacious stabling and offices, situate in the centre of town...and enjoying the advantages of Railway Communications", would be an ideal addition to his property portfolio and, hopefully, provide an outlet and occupation for his lively son.

The Crown, not belonging to any Southwold brewery, had gone through a succession of owners and tenants in the previous half century and had, in fact, been unoccupied for two years in the 1850s. The Gages provided stability being proprietors for twenty four years from 1881 until 1905. However, George was only 16 years old when his father bought the hotel for him and unlikely to provide stability on his own. (A photograph of him in his cricket blazer shows him at about this age.) The previous but one innkeeper, Richard Sage, is recorded in White's Suffolk as a victualler living at "The Crown family and commercial hotel and posting house" and it was that latter element which Henry knew would appeal to his horse-loving son. Richard Sage had managed The Crown with only his wife and two members of staff. Henry knew that a 16 year old, especially one of George's nature, would need more assistance than that so he increased staff numbers and closely oversaw the running of his new acquisition until his death in 1889.

As his father had suspected, George's interest in the hotel *per se* was minimal. His passion being horses he threw his energies into expanding the facilities at the rear of The Crown from stabling for post horses to full-blown livery stables. In the kitchen, however, was a young girl, 17 year old Alice Maria Wilson, (See photo on back cover) also originally from Lowestoft and perhaps spotted by Henry as a reliable worker. So it proved. She was efficient and confident and worked her way through the ranks of kitchen and hotel

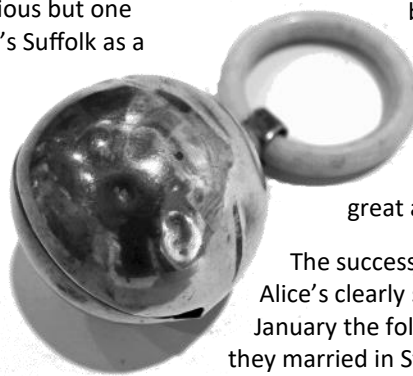
staff to ultimately become the hotel's manager, albeit the name above the door was George's. Alice's family's legend was that Alice was in charge of the catering for the celebratory party organised to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 although the following account from the Ipswich Journal of 24th June 1887 gives the credit to her father:



The dinner partaken by upwards of 700 persons was held in the grounds kindly lent for the occasion by the Rev. J N F Ewen, and a staff of 35 carvers and 70 waiters attended most assiduously to the wants of the numerous party who seemed in every way delighted by the arrangements made for them, and the liberality of the spread. Each carver's table had two joints of twenty pounds each of roast and boiled beef, and the course of plum puddings met with an enthusiastic reception - quite hot and of excellent quality. The whole was supplied by Mr Wilson of The Crown Hotel.



Perhaps Alice herself balked at being in sole charge of catering for so many people and overseeing so many extra staff or perhaps the idea of a slip of a girl of 23 being responsible for such a prestigious event was too much for Victorian sensibilities and Henry Gage decided to send Alice's father over from Lowestoft. George's granddaughter, Nancy Nevard, maintained that suckling pigs were on the menu that day and that the two pairs of meat skewers on display in the Museum adorned them. As roast beef and plum pudding were also on the menu 10 years later for the Diamond Jubilee street party in 1897 it would seem that that was the traditional fare on such occasions, unless there was a different menu for the top table and the great and the good enjoyed suckling pig instead.



The success of the day perhaps cemented George and Alice's clearly slow-burning relationship because in January the following year, 7 years after they had met, they married in St Edmund's church and moved out of The Crown to set up home in Anchor Villa, apparently leasing it from the Elmy family. (The exhibition displays a now sadly degraded printing plate of Anchor Villa and cards sent to the family there.) A little over a year after the marriage George's father, Henry, died in March 1889 at the age of 67 and George became the proprietor of The Crown in his own right. George and Alice's first daughter, Daisy, was born in 1890. Her teething ring and pink christening mug were kept as mementoes of the little girl who died aged only a year and a day in 1891. A second daughter, Dorothy, was born on 6th February 1899 and she defied the era's high infant mortality



rates, living until she was 100. George looks a proud father in the photo of him standing outside The Crown, infant daughter in his arms, nursemaid, Alice Keddie nearby with the pram.

Meanwhile, business was booming in the hotel and livery stables. Visitor numbers in Southwold had risen thanks to the increasing popularity of seaside breaks and the Southwold Railway which opened in 1879. George benefited from being on the cusp between the heyday of horses and their supersession by the motor car. By 1901 The Crown employed 10 members of staff other than George and Alice, including Alice's sister, Bertha, as barmaid, Maud Pallant as cook, Thomas Denny as 'Boots' and three ostlers in the stables. (Cutlery inscribed 'Crown Hotel Southwold-Gage' and napery stamped 'Gage 1895' are currently on display in the museum window.) The hotel being well-staffed, George would have had few, if any, qualms about leaving Alice in charge and concentrating on the stables. He had his own horse and a pony and trap both pictured in photographs, the latter being painted by Henry C. Saul as well. In the pony and trap he used to drive to and from the station to meet passengers and their luggage from the train and take them back after their stay in The Crown. The pony and trap was fitted with a large Hunter timepiece in a leather case which clipped to the footplate ensuring that he was never late for his visitors. He also had a small switch and a longer driving whip, the latter too large to be exhibited but which can be seen in the photograph of George and the pony and trap on The Common and in Henry Saul's painting.

George may have spent his daytimes in the stables but most evenings would find him in the bar. An imposing man, broad and dapper, he was a popular landlord as generous gifts of engraved cigarette and vesta cases testify. He would appear to have fostered a jocular, boozy atmosphere in the bar. Three cards remain bearing the inscription FREE PASS the front covers of which read:

*THIS PASS is good on all Railroads provided that the bearer walks, carries his own luggage, swims all rivers, and stops for all drinks and smokes at GEO. GAGE'S
ye olde Crown Hotel
This Pass is not transferable
except to another man with money.*

Printed inside the pass are ten commandments, four of which are set out below:-

1st When thirsty, thou shalt come to my house and drink. Thou shalt honour me and my barman so that thou may live long in the land and continue to drink in my house forever.

7th Thou shalt call at my place daily; if unable to come we shall feel it an insult unless you sendest a substitute or an apology.

8th Thou shalt not abuse thy fellow drinkers nor cast base insinuations by hinting that they can't drink too much.

10th Thou shalt not so far forget thy honourable position and high standing in the community as to ask the barkeeper to treat.

The Visitors' Book is also indicative of the atmosphere George cultivated in the hotel and of the esteem in which he was held. It is full of effusive entries, one of which inspired the article that follows this one, by Stephen Wells. Some of the entries are written in doggerel and accompanied by cartoon-like drawings:

We the undersigned hereby declare and make known to the world in general that we are highly satisfied and offer sincere thanks for his generous board and cheerful presence. The grub and attendances are well chosen and the most egotistic man or strictest epicure could not find fault in any way.

*I would like to fill these pages
All about The Crown and Gages.
As for living and the board
It is the best money can afford.
It is hardly elegant to behold*

*But it is the best in all Southwold.
Our stay at The Crown was over very soon,
From the 12th to the 14th of June.*

There is also a Christmas card to George, bearing a picture of a red chilli pepper and the message "With warmest Xmas wishes from One Hot-un to Another." The Christmas card he received from the Mayor and Mayoress, Mr and Mrs Edgar Pipe in 1904 is, unsurprisingly, more restrained, featuring the town crest whilst the cards George sent, rather like Royalty, featured himself striding across the High Street.

George's bonhomie was not limited solely



Above: George showing off new-born Dorothy in 1899 while Nursemaid, Alice Keddie, minds the pram. Left: George in his pony & trap. Right: His Hunter watch with leather case which clipped onto the trap.

to the bar. He was a member of the local branches of the Masons and the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes as his extant membership of the former and an 1898 photograph of him with other members of the Buffs outside the former Centre Cliff Hotel testify.

Popular as he was, George was no businessman. Lacking the guidance of his father he compounded his over- generosity by failing to see which way the wind was blowing. Like many others at the time he thought that the motor car was a passing fad and that the horse would continue to be king. He decided to invest more money in the livery stables. It was a mistake. In 1905 he was declared bankrupt and left Southwold with Alice and Dorothy to set up home in Newmarket where, of course, his passion for horses could be satisfied to the hilt. He and Alice took on The White Lion there but with Alice as the licensee. Sadly, George died only seven years later on 8th July 1912. He was 46. Alice soldiered on at The White Lion. On 18th February 1925 their daughter, Dorothy, then 26, married Percy Nevard, a man considerably older than she was. They initially lived in the pub with Alice

where their only daughter, Nancy, was born on 1st January 1926. After a while Dorothy, Percy and Nancy bought a house on Crockfords Road, Newmarket. Nancy trained as a teacher at Matlock Training College and then returned to Newmarket to the primary school at nearby Cheveley where she subsequently became head.

Alice Gage lived to the age of 97, dying on 1st January 1961. Percy Nevard had also died by then so when Cheveley school was faced with closure Nancy took redundancy and she and her mother decided to return to Dorothy's roots, buying a property in Seaview Road, Reydon, and bringing all their mementoes of George and Alice's lives at The Crown back with them. They remained in Seaview Road for the rest of their lives. Alice's genes had clearly been inherited, Dorothy living to be over 100 and her daughter, Nancy, to 86. Dorothy and Nancy's remains were taken back to Newmarket where Percy Nevard is buried but George and Alice are buried in Southwold, in St Edmund's churchyard, alongside their first daughter, Daisy.

Jenny Hursell

Gordon Craig

A visit to Southwold and a mystery solved



Some years ago I bought, unseen at auction a copy of 'On the Art of the Theatre' by Edward Gordon Craig. A really battered copy but with a bonus. Inside, tucked between the pages was a photograph of his uncle Fred and a series of notes on crisp blue paper signed 'Gordon Craig' in a very distinctive style.

I had given the photograph and autograph no thought for years. That is until Sonja Cooper offered to loan her collection of memorabilia to the Museum. (See article by Jenny Hursell above.) This group of items was centred on George Gage, licensee of the Crown in the 1890's. Among the various and random pieces was the visitors' book. The pages had recommendations from cycle clubs, commercial travellers and holiday makers, as well as drawings and risqué rhymes. But one insignificant signature and address caught my eye. The year was 1897, the address Thames Ditton and the name Gordon Craig. I checked my scrap of blue paper and 'Gordon Craig - the story of his life' by Edward Craig (his son.) The first confirmed the signature to be correct and the second that Craig had bought Rose Cottage, Summers Road in Thames Ditton, a short time before. It was well known that Edward Gordon Craig had visited Southwold, now we knew where he had stayed.

Edward Gordon Craig was born in Stevenage, Hertfordshire on 16th January 1872, the illegitimate son of the actress Ellen Terry and architect Edward Godwin. He took the name

Edward Henry Gordon but changed it by deed poll in 1893 to Edward Gordon Craig. Terry had married 46 year old George Watts, the painter, when she was 16 but separated from him after 10 months to live with Godwin. She was the leading lady to Sir Henry Irving's company at the Lyceum Theatre where she stayed for 20 years and where Craig had spent most of his childhood. It was no surprise when he decided to become an actor; various uncles, aunts and, of course, his mother were on the stage. He had some success in his chosen career playing, among other roles, Hamlet at the Lyceum in 1897.

He had married Helen Mary (May) Gibson in 1893 at the age of 21. By the time he was 25 he had fathered 5 children. His acting career came to an end in 1897 when he decided to make directing and stage design his path in life.

Another character now enters Craig's story, James Pryde. The two had briefly met at the Lyceum Theatre in London and again, rather strangely, on a train travelling to Uxbridge.

Craig was introduced by Pryde to William Nicholson his brother-in-law. Nicholson and Pryde had formed a lasting friendship and started to design posters together which would eventually give them universal success under the joint title 'W.J.

Beggarstaff' or the 'Beggarstaff Brothers.' During a visit to William and his wife Mabel, Craig had been charmed by the art of woodcut at which the 'Beggarstuffs' were expert and found a talent for this simple form of expression. He was later to sell his prints to supplement his meagre income.

Maybe at this meeting Pryde and Craig had decided to visit Martin Shaw at his home in Southwold for the first time. Professor George Odam in 2011 wrote a fine article for the Southwold Museum and Historical Society newsletter documenting Martin Fallas Shaw's life whilst living in South Green Cottage, Lorne Road so I won't repeat his words except to say that Craig and Shaw had met in London so a brief holiday and reunion with an old friend seemed a good idea. There seems to be some divergence of opinion as to



why Craig, Shaw and Pryde put on a performance in Southwold but I rather prefer Craig's story. He had a rather cavalier attitude to accuracy but he was always amusing. His version has a small theatrical company stranded in a nearby town, we don't know where, by a rather bogus manager. Craig and Pryde had learned of their plight in the inn at which they were staying which now turns out to be the Crown. A show was quickly arranged, "The bar parlour clamoured for it." *François Villon, Poet and Cut Throat* by S.X. Courte was the chosen offering in which Martin Shaw would be at the piano, James Pryde an all round actor and Craig would play the part of Pierrot. His costume, in which he was to be photographed, was made by the landlady Alice Gage in double quick time for not only was the performance to be ready in a day but she was



about to give birth "to a handsome child"* By all accounts it was blood and thunder, wind and rain effects and plenty of stirring music. With local participation by the postman singing "I must have been a lobster....." (unfortunately the rest of the libretto is lost) A near riot ensued and £1 -18s 6d was taken on the door, more than enough to get the stranded players home. Craig visited Southwold again the following June. There is no record of where he stayed that I can find. He soon moved on to Dunwich and rented Ivy Cottage and started on a new phase in his life.

* Craig could be confused about the imminent birth of Alice's child as her first born was Daisy in 1890 who died the following year. Dorothy was born in 1899 a year after Craig's first visit, maybe it's poetic licence.

Stephen Wells

A coastal airfield

Sleepy Covehithe has seen a surprising amount of action over the years

In our annual newsletter No.10 (2014)) there was a reproduction of the advertisement for 'Sir Alan Cobham's Great New Air Display'. This was held at Mr.Boggis' farm at Easton Bavents on Thursday 11th July 1935.

However, this was not the first time aerial activity had been seen in this locality, for in September 1915 a satellite of the Gt. Yarmouth RNAS 73 Air Wing Air Station was established at Covehithe. The site covered 82 acres and aircraft were regularly flown as anti-Zeppelin patrols.

534 Flight of 273 Squadron with DH-4 aircraft were based there in 1918/19 and in the latter year the airfield closed and the land returned to agriculture. Various buildings were constructed on the site and these were sold early in 1920. As its main role had been as a night station it was equipped with paraffin lights and a searchlight to aid the pilots. The hangar was described as being near the farmhouse and there were no concrete runways. Apart from the DH-4s, there were DH-9s and Sopwith Camels there at times. The landing ground was S.W. of St Andrew's Church, at 'Hog Pen Belt'.

The Royal Flying Corps was founded in April 1912 and the Royal Naval Air Service ran alongside it as part of the network founded by Winston Churchill.

In the 1920s a resident in Park Lane applied for permission to the aviation authority to fly a plane from Covehithe but he seemed to have abandoned his plans.

Plane with Swastika

However, another interesting incident occurred during WWII and is best told in the words of Mr.N.F.Pallent who was head of the local A.R.P. organisation.

"On the afternoon of May 5th 1941, a plane with a Swasticka flew over Covehithe, and after a peppering from some of the

coastal machine guns, circled above a field at Porter's Farm as if seeking to land. Seeing this, Arthur Allum, who was working with his father and others in an adjoining field, made after the intruder. He was unarmed and, despite his father's shout to take hisshovel with him did not pause to do so. He arrived at the plane as it grounded, when its occupants, two men, stepped out towards him with their hands up. Some soldiers under an officer then arrived and took the two men in charge. They stated they were Dutchmen and they had been sent up by their German masters to try out the machine, which was a new one. Taking advantage of the opportunity, had made a bolt for it, and here they were and mighty glad to be with us. Their story was subsequently found to be true." N.F.P.

Arthur Allum of the Home Guard was given a Certificate of Gallantry.

According to the Southwold A.R.P. Log Book, the time was 1.20. The plane had come from the German-occupied airfield of Schiphol. There was slight damage to the tail as it had been shot at by 3 Hurricanes and anti-aircraft defences. (Reported in The Times and the Daily Mirror as a test flight.)

The crew were Hidde Leegstra (a Fokker test pilot) and Piet J.C. Vos (a secretary with Fokker) and the plane had two Pratt & Whitney engines.

On the 7th May at 20.42 the plane was taken to Martlesham Heath and on the 12th to R.A.F. Farnborough, then to Miles Aircraft, Reading where the interest was in the wooden constructed wings. It was stored outside and allowed to rot away.

Paul Scriven

Sources:

Frostenden Parish Magazine. *

A.R.P. Log Book (Southwold) photocopy (RMCD) *

*"Fokker G1" pp 217-224 (Dutch Fokker Research Foundation)**

"Norfolk & Suffolk Airfield and Airstrips "(NfK & Suffolk Aviation Museum publication) Part II. *

*"My Second World War Diaries in Southwold"- Tom King**

Correspondence: H.S.Sawyer/Gerald E.Newson (1975) S.R.O. Lowestoft 119/A2/4

Copy correspondence: D.W.Reeves and the author (Southwold Museum ?)

* denotes author's collection.



DEATH AT THE GRAND

A 1930S HUMAN TRAGEDY

The morning of Saturday April 22, 1933 was unseasonably cold, unsettled and squally with a weakening Atlantic depression approaching the East Coast. There were few dog walkers or fishermen about on Southwold's seafront but those who happened to glance towards the Grand Hotel at around 12.30 may have witnessed an unusual if low-key incident: Police Superintendent Arthur Mills was bundling a short, slightly built young man in handcuffs into his car and was about to drive him up Pier Avenue to the Police Station on Station Road. Supt Mills had just arrested Percy Smith for "feloniously, wilfully and with malice aforethought killing and murdering Dorothy Talbot".

In the Depression-ridden 1930s, Southwold's Grand Hotel remained a place of privilege and luxury, beyond the aspirations of most locals. This sad, unkempt and under-nourished youth, wearing a worn-out jacket and waistcoat with 'trousers of a different material', as the local press snobbily observed, fell well outside the hotel's typical clientele profile.

Although it was the weekend, Southwold Police wasted no time in convening a dedicated magistrate's court that very afternoon at the Town Hall. In the chair was the Mayor and Chief Magistrate, retired Barclay's Bank Manager, Edgar Pipe, flanked by fellow magistrate Andrew



Critten - the owner of Homeknit, the town's very successful knitwear and hosiery business, - and by Deputy Chief Constable, G Staunton. It was a brief hearing at the end of which Percy was remanded in custody in Norwich Gaol. until Wednesday's Petty Sessions. So rapidly had these events taken place that not one of Southwold's habitual sensation-seekers had yet got wind of them and the courtroom's public 'gallery' was entirely empty.



Dorothy Violet Talbot (Dolly)

But one person who had got 'on the case' early was 14-year-old schoolboy John Harris staying in Southwold with his family at the end of the Easter holidays. Late in life he wrote down his memories of Southwold in the 20s and 30s. He wrote: "There was a suspected murder in the Grand Hotel. A woman had been found dead in one of the rooms and the man with whom she was staying was arrested. I remember seeing him looking very composed, being led from the police station to the Magistrate's Court. For a few days there was much speculation whether it was a suicide pact and, if so, was he guilty of murder?"

This tantalisingly brief account was the first I'd heard about the Southwold Murder Mystery and it was this that set me off trying to track down the details of what turned out to be

a human tragedy of almost Shakespearian poignancy. Here's what I pieced together.

Percy Samuel Charles Smith was 24 in 1933, living at 213 Clapham Road, Lowestoft – a few doors from his childhood home. Despite his boyish stature and demeanour, Percy had a past. He had been a merchant seaman for a time, he was

married but separated and had a child to support. Now he was working in lowly jobs in hospitality in and around Lowestoft – as a waiter or porter. There was very little money to spare.

The previous summer, while working at the just-opened Pakefield Holiday Camp (the pre-cursor of Pontins) he had met a girl called Dolly who also had a casual job there. Dolly (Dorothy Violet Talbot) was 28, four years older than Percy, and she was living with her mother, Martha Salter, at 516 London Road. Dolly was from Martha's first marriage to Henry George Talbot, who had died of an unspecified illness, having been repatriated from France by his regiment the Second Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers, in 1918. Dolly had a younger brother, Henry, who was away at sea with the Navy. Martha had married again – to Charles Salter – and produced another girl, Dolly's half-sister, Kathleen. But this marriage did not last.

Dolly was single but had herself borne two children, a girl aged three and a boy aged five, from two separate affairs. She and her mother looked after the little girl, Daphne



Violet, at home, but the boy was privately fostered to a woman in East Dereham to whom Dolly paid 8 shillings a week (equivalent to about £27 today.) The boy's father was meant to pay most of it but he'd emigrated to New Zealand and the payments had dried up. Until recently Dolly had steady jobs, first at the Co-op cannery on Waveney Drive (the biggest in Europe) and more recently at the Kirkley Steam Laundry but she had been sacked from that. For the past year she had been alternating between casual work at the holiday camp and the dole. The camp paid 11s/4 ½d a week but that was only during holiday periods and once she'd paid her mother a contribution for her keep, there was virtually nothing left.

She was often depressed and often missed work complaining of vague physical symptoms such as catarrh or feeling sick for which she made repeated visits to the doctor 'on the Panel'. (This was a pre-NHS insurance-based healthcare scheme). Percy went with her to the doctor because he was concerned. But no definite diagnosis was forthcoming.

The Talbot's was a small home and Dolly had to share a bed with her mother. Understandably, Dolly's mother longed to see her married off. Allegedly there was a suitor but Dolly was not interested. She wanted only Percy.

'Accidental' Daughter

Dolly and Percy had really hit it off. They were working together at the camp again over the Christmas holidays and started dating every day. Pretty soon they were having regular sex and Dolly was angling for a more permanent arrangement. She had told Percy about her 'accidental' daughter and he seemed fine about it, but she didn't mention her other 'accident'. Percy had told Dolly about his own commitments and about his marital status. He did tell her that, much as he loved her, he "could not see his way clear" to setting up home together at present. So, they carried on dating with the big impossible issue of the future unresolved and largely undiscussed.

On a couple of occasions Dolly brought Percy home and the two of them sometimes took her little girl out. Her mother was lukewarm about Percy and the clearer it became that the relationship was serious the less she liked it. She certainly couldn't contemplate him as a potential husband for Dolly and she told her that she wasn't to invite him home again.

Much of the time Dolly was cheerful and fun to be with. But she had bouts of deep depression which bewildered Percy. Over Easter, Percy and Dolly both had a few days' work at the Pakefield Holiday Camp again and would wait for each other to walk up there together. On one occasion Percy asked her why she seemed so unhappy and Dolly burst into tears, saying: "You wouldn't understand" and "there are things you don't know about me." Another time Dolly wanted to know whether Percy really loved her and he assured her that he did. "And does it make you love me less that I slept with another man and I've got an illegitimate child?" "No, it doesn't. Not in the least." "What would make

you love me less?" she persisted. Percy hated this line of conversation: "Nothing would." But Dolly went on and on until Percy said jokingly: "Well maybe if you'd slept with lots of men and had lots of illegitimate kids!" Dolly fell silent then shouted angrily "it's not true!" Before bursting into tears and walking off leaving Percy feeling wretched. His wretchedness wasn't helped by the fact that he'd recently overheard a bit of gossip at work that suggested that Dolly was something of a tramp and had more than one "bastard kid". He didn't believe it and he still loved her but it put yet another tripwire into their already fraught relationship.

"We could go by gas."

On 15th April, Easter Sunday, the couple met on their way to Pakefield for the evening shift. Dolly said she'd felt unwell

all day and the two of them decided to skip work. They walked back to Lowestoft South Beach and found a sheltered, private spot on what was now a deserted beach in almost complete darkness. Dolly kissed Percy and said once again that she wanted to spend the rest of her life with him and if she couldn't do that she wanted them to die

together. They could do it now by walking into the sea hand in hand and drowning. It would be easy and then they would be together forever. Percy took fright at this and told her that if she could only wait, in time they could be together as man and wife. She didn't believe him and told him that if he didn't want to walk into the sea with her now, she would do it herself.

Finally, Percy prevailed, saying that he would do as she wanted but not now and not into the sea. "We could go by gas," she suggested. Percy was relieved that the danger was temporarily shelved. It was now a quarter to one in the morning and he insisted on walking her home to her front door - just in case.

Percy had hoped that these suicidal thoughts would have dissipated by the next time he saw her on Wednesday 18th April. But instead they had firmed up into a coherent plan. Gas was definitely the answer. It was quick and painless, just like going to sleep and never waking up. What they would do is check into a hotel room with a gas fire and just go to sleep in each other's arms.

"But what hotels in Lowestoft have gas fires?" "None," said Dolly. "I've done my research, and the only hotel in the area with gas fires in the bedrooms is The Grand in Southwold. Can you book us in for Friday evening?" Percy said he would and he and Dolly walked the short distance to the GPO on London Road where he made the call to the Grand - Southwold 37. The manageress, Mrs Holmes-Archer took the call and he made a reservation in the names of Mr & Mrs Smith and said that they were from Great Yarmouth and that they wanted a room for one night. They were attending a wedding on the Saturday and would not require any meals.

Rubber pipe

They didn't see each other on Thursday but, on Friday morning Dolly had to go shopping for her mother and asked Percy to accompany her. As they were walking round Woolworths, Dolly contrived to lead them past the home &



garden department and pointed to some red rubber hosepipe. "We should get some of that," she said. Percy's heart fell as he realised what she must mean. At first, he pulled her past the counter telling her not to be silly, but later, after they had finished their errands, she told him that he should go back and buy that tubing. So he did. They only had 10 ft so he bought it all. The assistant coiled it up, wrapped it in brown paper and tied it with twine.

Gas Light Company

That evening they took the Eastern Counties bus to Southwold, alighting at about 7.30pm at the depot beside the now defunct Railway Station at the junction of Blyth Road and Station Road. If they'd looked just 50 yards or so down Station Road they might just have seen in the twilight the ominous silhouette of one of Southwold's pride and joys – the state-of-the-art gas works of the Southwold Gas Light Company. Just across Station Road lay the Pier Avenue Hotel - once called 'Station Hotel', nowadays 'The Blyth' - and Percy suggested a drink there before checking in to the Grand. At one level the couple felt a sense of giggly, transgressive excitement at checking into a luxury hotel together as man and wife. But in the pit of Percy's stomach was the churning dread of what lay ahead and how he would deal with it when the moment came.

They sat in the bar of the Pier Avenue Hotel and had a drink. Percy was flush that night. In his pocket he had nearly £1/10s. If Dolly's plan went ahead there would, of course, be no bill to pay in the morning. But in the hope that he could succeed in talking her out of it, the room would cost them at least 13/-. Percy asked the landlord, Leslie Moor, if he could use the phone and rang the Grand to ask whether a fire could be lit in their room to warm it up for when they arrived. He was told that the housekeeper had already put a shilling in the meter and lit the fire at 8 o'clock and that it should be nice and warm by the time they got there. At the back of his mind Percy had the idea of burning off as much gas as possible before they got there. He bought them another couple of drinks then they walked down Pier Avenue towards the Sea.

It was by no means the first time Mrs Holmes-Archer had been confronted by an uneasy looking young 'Mr & Mrs Smith'. She showed them up to room number 49 - a nice big twin-bedded room on the first floor with a bay window overlooking the sea and a lighted gas fire - and asked them what time they would like to be woken. "Eight o'clock, please," said Percy. After she had left they both got quite giggly about their situation and, with several drinks inside them on empty stomachs, started to feel more relaxed.

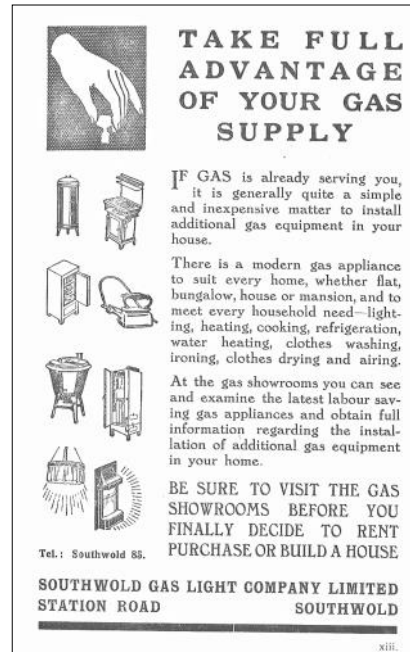
They were interrupted by the chambermaid, Gladys Denny, carrying two ceramic hot water bottles. who found them falling about laughing when she knocked on the door.

The couple undressed and got into one of the single beds and had a cigarette and a chat. Then they had sex or, as the court report would later quaintly put it: "conduct which had been going on since December was repeated." Everything seemed so natural and relaxed that Percy felt his fears receding. "I wish we could always be together like this," said Dolly. "We could be," said Percy, eagerly. "We just have to wait and one day it will be possible." But Dolly's mood darkened. "No, I'm afraid it won't ever be possible. There are things you don't know about me." Then she said brightly: "What a good job I got you to buy that tubing!" She got the parcel out of her bag and started untying it. Percy's dread returned. "What if I refuse to come with you?" "Then I'll go by myself." She urged him to get out of bed and set up the hose. Percy was relieved to see that the fire was not burning as brightly as before and thought maybe the shilling's worth of gas was running out. He turned the fire off, then the main gas tap, and attempted to undo the wing nut. It wouldn't yield until Dolly helped by hitting it with the heel of her shoe several times before it gave. Now Percy had to prise the rubber tube over the gas outlet. "It won't fit," he said. "Yes, of course it will. Maybe use that parcel twine to tie it on." So eventually he managed to butt the end of the rubber tube up against the outlet and secure it loosely in place by tying it around the pipe with the twine. Percy was relieved to observe that it was quite a leaky connection and he hoped the money was, in any case, about to run out. Dolly meanwhile was busy feeding the other end of the tube in through the bedclothes at the foot of the bed. It only just reached up to the top and she didn't want to stretch it too much for fear of dislodging it from the gas meter. When she was satisfied, she turned the gas tap on full and got into bed. Surreptitiously, before he got in after her,

Percy turned the tap half off. He was pretty hopeful that what was left of the gas couldn't do them much harm. They cuddled each other under the bedclothes and Dolly lay her head on his arm while she grasped the rubber tube in her hand and said quietly: "It's all right, Perce."

Wheels of justice

Percy woke with a start, got out of bed and was immediately sick. There was a slight smell of gas but it wasn't flowing now and he was reassured to see that his makeshift hose connection had come loose. It was getting light outside.



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SOUTHWOLD GAS LIGHT COMPANY LIMITED
STATION ROAD SOUTHWOLD



From top: Contemporary advertisement for the Southwold Gas Light Company. The company's showroom in Station Road with offices and gas works behind. Pay-as-you-go gas meter of the 1930s.



There was a knock on the door. His 8 o' clock call. He went to check on Dolly. She seemed to be sleeping soundly. But she was cold. She was dead.

Percy rang the service bell and when the morning Chambermaid, Beatrice, came back he told her calmly to fetch Mrs Holmes-Archer as he was worried about his wife. The manageress came and found Percy with his arms round Dolly, sobbing. "I'm afraid she's dead," he said. "Gas."

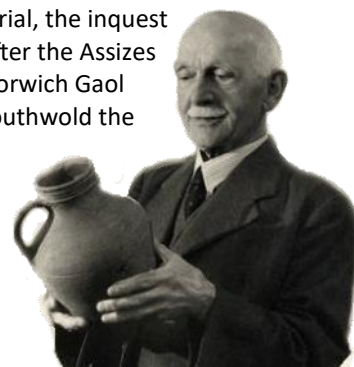
The wheels of justice revolved much faster in those days, it seems. Apart from Supt Arthur Mills, Inspector Holmes and pc Frary from Southwold station, first on the scene, at 8.30am was Dr Dudley Collings, Southwold's Medical Officer of Health and, as it happens, the first curator of Southwold Museum which would open its doors for the first time two months after this event. Dr Collings confirmed death by coal gas poisoning. He was followed by young Barrett Jenkins who, at 29, was rapidly acquiring a reputation as a photographer to rival that of his famous father, Frederick. Barrett took numerous pictures of the crime scene and later enlarged them for use in court. Another visitor that morning was George Crick, Managing Director of the Southwold Gas Light Company and a qualified gas engineer himself. He found 72 cubic feet of coal gas, paid for but still unused which was rather at odds with Percy's claim that he found the gas had all but run out when he awoke.

Carbon monoxide poisoning

The following day, Sunday, Dr Eric Biddles, pathologist at East Suffolk Hospital in Ipswich, visited the tiny mortuary where Dolly's body lay, behind Southwold Cottage Hospital, to perform a post mortem. His conclusion was that she had died from carbon monoxide poisoning by inhaling a large volume of coal gas in a very short time – between half a minute and three minutes. Her blood contained between 65 and 70% of CO. Death would have occurred within the same period. It was clear that Dolly had inhaled the gas virtually directly out of the hose.

Percy was now languishing in Norwich Gaol but was back at Southwold for the opening of the inquest before a hastily empanelled jury at the police station on Tuesday evening. The jury voted Henry Buckler - newsagent, tobacconist (and, reputedly, undercover betting agent) of 37 High Street - as their chairman. However, having issued permission to Dolly's

family to proceed with her burial, the inquest was quickly adjourned until after the Assizes in May. Then it was back to Norwich Gaol for Percy and back again to Southwold the next day, Wednesday, for the opening of the Police Petty Sessions at the Town Hall. In contrast to the empty chamber on Saturday, the public seating was full and in the Market Place there was a crowd of citizens who couldn't get in. Edgar Pipe, the Mayor, was once more in the chair and the other magistrates included Deputy Mayor, Bernard Bee, headmaster of Eversley Boys'



Dr Collings, Medical Officer of health and passionate amateur archaeologist. He was shortly to become the first curator of Southwold Museum. He was on the scene within half an hour.

School, Andrew Critten of Homeknit, Pierse Loftus, Chairman of Adnams and soon-to-be-MP for Lowestoft, Richard Coling, another Adnams board director, Ernest Allen who ran the monumental mason's in the High Street and was also Captain of Southwold Fire brigade and Charles Fowler who had the building company in Blackmill Road. The Clerk was the Borough Solicitor, the fearsome Septimus Harrison. As one might have guessed from such a hastily convened session, the local police had not had time to assemble witnesses, so the court was adjourned until May 3rd, with the prosecution case to open at Bury St Edmunds Assize on May 30th.

The court was reconvened a week later when Mr George J Ball, CBE attended to represent the Director of Public Prosecutions. Summing up, he contended that Percy had clearly intended to kill Dorothy and had made detailed plans to do so. He would therefore be committed for trial on a charge of wilful murder at Suffolk May Assizes – less than two weeks later. Percy was granted legal aid.

The trial opened at Bury on Tuesday May 30th to a packed public gallery. The Judge was Thomas Gardner Horridge, an elderly man with liberal instincts. As a Liberal candidate in 1906 he had famously unseated Tory Prime Minister, Henry Balfour in Manchester East. He had also campaigned vigorously against Chinese Slavery. Prosecuting was the formidable and brusque Sir James Dale Cassels, KC who was



From left: **Barrett Jenkins** in later life. He followed his father, Frederick, into his photographic business but later branched out into the burgeoning new technologies of radio, gramophone and movies. **George Crick**, MD of the Southwold Gas Light Company. Judge **Thomas Gardner Horridge**. Prosecuting counsel, **Sir James Dale Cassels, KC**, the 'second rudest man at the bar'.

known among colleagues as “the second rudest man at the bar”, the rudest apparently being Sir Peter Hastings. Defending Percy was a Mr FT Alpe. The jury consisted of 11 men and one woman.

When both the prosecution and defence had completed their questioning of all the witnesses, the judge explained to the jury the decisions facing them. We need to remember that, until 1961, suicide was a criminal offence, and a failed suicide could be punished by hanging. Aiding a suicide attempt was also criminal and punishable by a long prison term. If the jury decided that there was an intention to kill Dolly, it was murder. If they concluded that this was a suicide pact in which one party survived, then it was also a case of murder. If they believed that Percy helped Dolly to commit suicide, he was also guilty of murder. But if they thought beyond reasonable doubt that Percy honestly believed that there wasn't enough gas remaining to kill her, then he was not guilty. The jury were left to ponder this overnight at Everard's Hotel in Cornhill where they were accommodated.

Next morning, Mr Alpe addressed the jury in terms which today might be considered highly questionable. He told them that their judgement should not be clouded by the morals of this young man. “This is not a court of morals but a court of Assize.” Ignoring his own guidance, he characterised Dolly as “a woman of the world who had had unfortunate love affairs” whereas, as anyone can tell from watching him in the dock, Percy was “only a lad.” Not surprisingly Dolly's mother broke down in hysterics at this scurrilous characterisation of her daughter as a loose woman and had to be removed from court. Her screams continued to be heard from outside the court room. Nevertheless, George Horridge congratulated Mr Alpe on a very able defence. The jury took just 40 minutes to reach their verdict: “Not Guilty!”

The public had made up their minds long before about the hapless young lad in the dock. They liked him. They greeted the verdict with spontaneous applause, prompting the judge to threaten to send them all to prison for contempt of court.

Percy walked free. What he did thereafter is undocumented. Did he make a life for himself? Did he marry again? Did he look back on this episode as a terrible remembered nightmare from which, with time, he seemed increasingly distanced? Or was it a truly seminal moment which informed and shaped the rest of his life. At any rate, it was quite a long life. The only other event for which I can find documentary evidence is his death – in 1987, in Luton, aged 78.

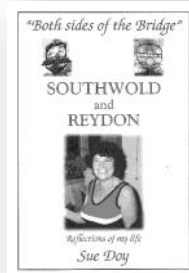
Martha's sailor son, Dolly's younger blood brother, Able Seaman Henry Edward Talbot, lost his life at Dunkirk in 1940, aged 34. Martha herself died in 1949. Dolly was buried in the family plot in Kirkley Cemetery, Lowestoft, but there is no memorial to her.

Barry Tolfree

Sources: This story has been compiled from contemporary newspaper reports, War and regimental records, 1911 census records, birth marriage and death records via Ancestry.co.uk, and findagrave.com. Details on Southwold institutions and personalities are drawn from Southwold Museum and southwoldandson.co.uk. The story contains a certain amount of, I hope reasonable, conjecture about the thoughts, feelings and conversations of the people involved. With thanks to Jim Blythe for permission to reproduce the photo of George Crick

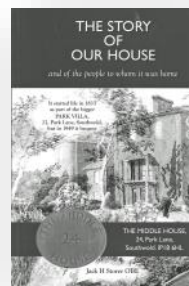
BOOKS

TWO LOCAL BOOKS OF 2017



‘Both Sides of the Bridge’ by Sue Doy

We all carry a huge amount of information in our heads, much of which is the tomorrow's history. It is always interesting to contemporaries (and others) to see some of these memories in print. Such a book is ‘Both Sides of the Bridge’ by Sue Doy. Here we can recall with her, scenes, shops, people, and activities (in which Sue is still so actively involved). This book was quickly sold out and a short run re-print was necessary to meet demands. I found it a delightful read.



‘The Story of our House’ by Jack Storer O.B.E.

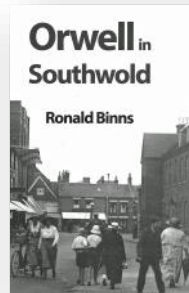
The other book was entirely different but no less enjoyable. It was the well researched book ‘The Story of Our House... and the people to whom it was home’. This took the story of Middle House, Park Lane, back to its origins in 1833 and those who had been its occupants. Plans and illustrations help tell that story. 40 of those years have been by the author and his wife Margaret.

What an achievement for this well known local resident, Jack Storer O.B.E. as he was then approaching his 100th birthday. This is such a useful piece of detective work and adds to our knowledge of local history.

The article in this issue ‘Writing your Family & Local History’ may spur others on to do likewise. Jack has proved that it's never too late.

P.S.

...AND NEW IN 2018



‘Orwell in Southwold’ by Ronald Binns

Local Author, Ronald Binns, has been a familiar figure in the town as he conducted his popular Orwell walking tours of Southwold during recent Arts Festivals. Many unanswered questions have remained about Orwell's enigmatic relationship with the town, its citizens, his friends and family and particularly with those local young women whom he loved and ceaselessly lusted after. Two years of intensive research by Ronald

Binns have unearthed a wealth of new material, among it a seam of hitherto unquarried documents he discovered in the Lowestoft Record Office. In Binns' hands, Orwell (or Eric Blair as he was best known in his 20 years here) comes disconcertingly alive in ways that may surprise even hardened Orwellians... As a sometimes troubled, gauche young man with a lot of ‘baggage’ and a surfeit of lust... Irritating, loveable and exasperating by turns... A sex pest, a control freak, a sometimes chaotic constructor of plots, a man of passion, an undoubted genius. You will never walk around the streets of Southwold again without eying the four front doors behind which he lived and scribbled, half expecting him to burst out of one on his way to another assignation with the adored Eleanor Jaques. ‘Orwell in Southwold’ is published by Zoilus Press at £7.99 and is widely available locally, including at the museum.

B.T.



WRITING YOUR FAMILY AND LOCAL HISTORY?

Cynthia Wade

Did you know that there is a possibility that the Suffolk Record Office in Lowestoft may be closed or relocated? Yes, I know we have to make cuts to pay for essential services but many people in this part of Suffolk will be sorry to lose that facility.

Over the years I have spent many a happy hour researching my family and local history... trawling through microfilms of old newspapers, census returns, church registers, beside the endless interesting books they have. The staff are always helpful and knowledgeable; we shall miss them if they have to go.

I am a Suffolk woman through and through, although I was born in Islington on Highgate Hill. My Mother was born in the Elmhams, to Jane and James Page in 1914. They married on Boxing Day when she was 19 and he 38, so quite an age difference. They had seven children, nearly all born in August, three girls and four boys.

James was an agricultural worker as were 80% of Suffolk men at that time. Life was very, very hard, living in extreme poverty as I know from three handwritten exercise books I have which my favourite Uncle wrote at my suggestion. He was Christened Cyril, but was always known as Digger or Digs. Nicknames are funny things. Are they still used? Very often the eldest son was named after his father or someone else in the family so nicknames came in handy.

In 1936 Grandmother Jane went with my Mother then aged 22, and her youngest daughter, Dora, without telling the boys, to London to improve their lives. After leaving Rumburgh School my Mother became a domestic at Frostenden Hall. In London she trained to be a cook at Battersea Technical College and married my father in June 1938. I was born in June 1939. It seems I was not planned but I never knew that until after she died, but that is another story.

Delivery boy

James, in very poor health, was living with his eldest daughter Rachel and her husband Jack Denny, one of the fishing family of Dennys, at Eastway Cottage, 17 East Street with their fish shop adjoining their front wall. You can see the outline of their building on the outside wall of the house next door. Uncle Digs was their delivery boy, cycling to Walberswick, Reydon and Southwold in all weathers until they had two burglaries in a week and kerosene was poured over their floors and the shop closed down. I trawled through the newspapers at the Record Office and found the report in 1937. Digger was always a worker. At one time working for Jenkins, the photographer, in what is now the Jack Wills shop.

At the age of 17, in 1939, he joined the Royal Navy. Both his brothers had signed up in 1937. He was posted to H.M.S. 'Wildfire', a training ship with 600 other boys. It was a different world from anything he had known, but at least he

had a roof over his head, had clothes on his back, was fed and paid five shillings and threepence a week. He called it seven months in Sing Sing. After that he was posted to H.M.S. 'Warspite', a famous battleship. His writing makes fascinating reading. His action station was at the bottom of the ship in the six-inch magazine where all the cordite was stored.

Philosophical

He was very philosophical about everything. "If we were hit it would flood, if it blew we would not know anything about it anyway". He was at the Battle of Narvik when the Norwegian fleet was destroyed to keep it out of the hands of the Nazis. Then on to Egypt and Alexandria. Soon after that all hell broke loose and Italy and Europe entered the conflict. The exercise book No.1. is full of the battles he was at. At the end of the war he spent a while going back to Hamburg, but that is another interesting story. Returning to England, he obtained his pilot's licence. I remember as a child helping him learn his compass points.

He signed on H.M.S 'Himalaya' which took people from this country to a new life in Australia. They paid £10 for their passage. He eventually went to live in Melbourne with his wife whom he had met at Butlin's, Skegness in 1948.

In 1946, and in poor health, I came up to live with another of my Mother's brothers, Uncle Les, his wife and their young daughter in Stoven, going to school at Henham until 1948. Uncle was a fisherman trawling out of Lowestoft, so I remember the old fish market and the radio messages we had from him. After that I came up on the Grey Green coach from London by myself for the summer holidays.

My Grandmother never came back to Suffolk nor had anything to do with her family except my Mother. Aunty Dora, the youngest daughter did come back to Southwold and with her husband, Bill Jackson, ran the tea rooms at the Boating Lake for some years.

My daughter and I bought a cottage in Covert Road, Reydon in 1989 as a holiday home and when I retired I came to live here, so back to my roots.

My daughter is now the family historian and subscribes to Ancestry; she is a wizard with the computer, while I am hopeless. They have recently had an offer of having your D.N.A. tested so I sent mine off a few weeks ago. It takes up to 8 weeks. It will be interesting when I see it.

What is the point of this article It is to suggest that older members of your family write their life story, so future generations know what it was like for them, and start your own life story because things change all the time, and that is what history is all about.

Cynthia Wade



POTENTIAL FOR EXPANSION

Paul Scriven surveys the local property boom at the turn of the last century

Simon Loftus in his book 'An illustrated history of Southwold' (2012) (a Museum Publication) writes of the development of Southwold following the sale of the Town Farm by the Borough for £8000 to the Coast Development Corporation Ltd. c.1888.

Clearly the purchasers saw the potential in developing this small seaside town. They also acquired land in Reydon, built the pier, the large Grand Hotel and the smaller 'Randolph Hotel' and the 'Station Hotel' (now the 'Blyth'). Visitors were able to use the Southwold Railway with its link at Halesworth to the main line to get to the seaside .

The firm then offered building plots for sale around the road layout of Pier Avenue, Cautley Road, Hotson Road, Field Stile Road and Marlborough Road, as well as Wangford Road and Cecil Road in Reydon.

The auction of 10 August 1900 offered 125 plots on the Reydon Estate , the catalogue stating that:

"A fine hotel 'The Randolph' has just been erected and is now open. The Coast Development Corporation are prepared to supply electricity. Main water has been laid by the Southwold Water Company".

Further auctions of 1 September 1902 offered 91 plots and, in July 1907, 66 plots, these in Southwold. (The plan shows between Wangford Rd & Halesworth Rd - Randolph Road, Salisbury Road, Balfour Road and Cecil Road proposed)

Although auction catalogues do not necessarily reveal the vendors, it would seem that others had seen a potential in offering building plots. The executors of Mary Vernon Brame (d.1874) offered 40 plots (The West End estate) adjoining the Common in 1893 and, in 1919, the Bridge Farm Estate (G.S.Alefounder). Another sale (vendor unknown) in 1884 was 7 plots on the North Cliff Estate in which it was stated that "Good building bricks may be obtained near the property", the land in fact being adjacent and eastwards of the Brick Works.

Most of these early sales, at which some plots were unsold, were conducted by Eaton Womack Moore, auctioneer, estate agent etc., (Mayor 1899-1902 and 1907-1909), later acting for Capt.(then Major) H.A. Adnams. There does not seem to have been great enthusiasm for these projects.

In a bundle of letters to H.A. Adnams between 1924 and 1932 some of those who had bought plots of land were pleading with him to find a buyer. These were not local people but wrote from e.g. Watford, Acton, Parkstone Dorset, Chadwell Heath, Westminster, Clacton, London Bridge. Were they speculators or had they intended building

houses in the town for themselves? Here are two examples of these letters:

"I am absolutely fed up with holding my land in Pier Avenue, Southwold. Will take £230 which is what I gave for it" (Philip G.Sharpe 4 April 1929.)

"In September 1922 I consulted you as to 2 plots of land in Pier Avenue, Southwold I bought in 1899. Paid £200 a plot. You then said you would leave it for 5 years as things were not moving. Can you tell me if much building has been carried out on this estate if it is worthwhile my advertising". (Wm G.Curryer, Acton. 20 March 1930)



In some of this correspondence, road charges were mentioned. Could they see yet more outlay ?

It would have been interesting to have had another James Maggs to tell us what the local populace thought of all

this potential development. In 1801 the population of the town was 1024 not much different from today. In a gradual rise it reached 3370 by 1921 and then the numbers fell again. Large families and better life-expectancy have to be taken into consideration.

However, it was not an entirely 'dead' market as Eaton Moore kept a small book* in which were pasted a copy of the press advertisement and the auction (bidding , sale price and buyer. Below are a few examples. (* book used much later by Adnams for a similar purpose)

Most of the auctions were held at the Swan Hotel.

1 Apr.1880 instructions of Mr.Thomas Smith.

Freehold Residence known as the Old Elms 63 ft in Queen Street and the house extends 77 ft in Mill Lane. Gas on ground floor. For many years residence of the late Capt. Rayley R.N. Bidding only reached £710 and was bought in, (unsold)

1881.Executors of George Prestwidge decd. 2 modern dwelling houses with gardens, 2 cottages with garden, 2 plots of building ground and 5 shares in Southwold Railway Co.

Lot 1. No;4 South End. Marine residence occ. Mrs John Child. House recently remodelled (sold £355 Peck)

Lot2. Summer House erected last 10 years, large garden extending to Skilman's Hill Brick & tile built white brick front(£535 W.Nolloth)*

Lot 3. Plot of building ground frontage of abt 45 ft.Skilman's Hill,depth 75 ft (W.Nolloth £150)



Lot 4. Plot of bdg land frontage of abt 26 ft towards South End or Green depth of 92 ft and 23 ft at back with strip running back on Skilman's Hill sufficiently wide for a cartway (withdrawn-sold privately £75 I.C. Prestwidge)

Lot 5. Two cottages & gdns now occ. Mr. Major and Mrs Smith. Frontage of abt 62 ft towards South End or Green with av.depth of abt 35 ft. (£125 I.C. Prestwidge)

Lot 6 was the fully paid up shares in the Southwold Railways Co. which were sold at £5.5.0 to Peck)

**There is a right of way to a pump of excellent spring water on Lot 1 and to Skilman's Hill through Lot 1.*

6 Sept 1883. 3 substantially built brick and tile freehold houses now in occ. of Mr Chaston, grocer, Mr. McCowan, shoemaker, Mr. Powditch, carrier.... Are most advantageously situated for business purposes, having extensive frontages to Queen Street and Pinkney's Lane. There are convenient back entrances and a large enclosed yard in which are brick and tile erections used as wood and coal houses. (£430 E. Harding)

21 April 1890..Sole Bay Cottage, South Green...commands a fine sea view over the Green and Gun Hill (£400 Mr Jonas Herrington)

2 Apr. 1891. Seaside Residence known as South Green Cottage occupies commanding position situate on South Green and adjacent to South Cliff and Gun Hill (£630 Mr. Laurence Debney)

4 June 1895. Lot 2. Cottages adjoin property of Mrs Ellis west side South Green. Cottage in the occ. of Miss Vertue which is familiarly known as The Old Town Hall and recognised as such by the old Escutcheon over the entrance; bounded south by Lot 1 and north by property of Miss Vertue. This has a back entrance and a right to use the well on Lot 1 (£105 Agnes Mary Vertue)

14 Feb. 1898. Executors of Mrs M.A. Spence decd. Brick built well designed Residence and Premises known as Caithness House having a frontage with sea view of 42 ft on East Cliff Green. At side of house is a 2 storied (sic) building used as a warehouse and shop. Lately been connected with the main sewer. Water from the Company's main. (£615.5s.0d Hawkes.)

19 June 1899 Executors of the late Mr. William Howard Elmy. A valuable freehold residence tog. with gardens, coach house & stabling known as Anchor Villa (£1200 H.R. Atkins)

28 Apr. 1902 (at the Drill Hall) on instructions of Mr. Laurence Debney. Seaside Residence "South Green Cottage" now in his occupation (£660 H.B. Hafren(?))

These few examples, (with abbreviations) are mainly of recognisable properties today. All the information in this article has been taken from the H.A. Adnams Collection in the Museum Library (SOWDM 2007:18) and there is a catalogue listing by Cynthia Wade and myself of the 351 documents relating to auctions/sales of property, contents etc., in Southwold and its vicinity. It is a fascinating collection and worthy of further study. It was through the generosity of the late Mr. J.A Adnams and the initiative of Mr. Bernard Segrave-Daly that I was able to peruse and convey this collection into the care of SMHS in 2007.

Paul Scriven

Sad Recollection

On Monday afternoon 12th February 2018 London Radio News announced that the City Airport had been closed for the day because, during the planned work on King George V docks, a 1100 lb bomb had been discovered. The airport would remain closed on Tuesday so the bomb could be removed safely. 1100lb is equivalent to about 500 kg so the bomb would have been a German WWII standard SC500 kg bomb. On display in Southwold Museum is a photograph of a FW190 fighter bomber carrying one of these bombs.

On a Saturday in May 1943 a squadron of these aircraft attempted a low level raid on Lowestoft but were thwarted by the barrage balloons there. The aircraft turned south and flew over Wangford where one bomb was dropped to explode harmlessly on the marsh. The other aircraft turned eastwards and out to sea passing over Southwold dropping their bombs as they did so. This was Southwold's worst raid of the war. Hollyhock Square was destroyed, other houses destroyed or badly damaged. St. Edmund's Church



Hollyhock Square after the bombing.

windows were blown out and, worst of all, there were a number of casualties, for these were powerful bombs.

On Tuesday 13th February 2018 a member of the four man Royal Navy Bomb Disposal team described on the radio local news how the London City Airport bomb problem would be solved. Team members, Andy Waller and Alex Bonato, would dive 15 metres into the depths, dig away the clay around the bomb and attach a strap to it so it could be lifted, probably by flotation bags. Eventually the bomb was taken down the Thames to an MoD base at Shoeburyness in Essex, placed on the seabed and detonated safely on Wednesday afternoon, leaving Andy Waller some time to spend at home in Lowestoft before returning to the team base at Portsmouth and awaiting the next job. Even after more than 70 years unexploded munitions are still being found and we give thanks that we have very brave men to deal with them.

Peter Moore

Fockler FW190 Fighter/Bomber





Alice Maria Gage (née Wilson)—a very resourceful woman.
See page 3.



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