



# SMHS JOURNAL 19

THE ANNUAL MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTHWOLD MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
JUNE 2019

The bombs flew backwards & fore off the  
back of a house in Field Style Road - made  
more cracks at the Grand Hotel - broke the  
windows of Glauco's. & Mr. Stammers' house  
on the front. - We were just past the Home  
Knot when I pulled the brake over the  
Wilmer garden making straight for us. I saw  
to Charles. It's a forerun - but before I got  
the last word out. Screaming bombs fell  
& landed by the Rd Station home in the  
March in front of the Stella Park. By the  
time we got to the S.P. The Raider was well  
away towards Blythborough. - In each case  
the siren sounded too late & the last  
one came just after the All Clear went.  
Old Mr & Mrs Balderson's house was marked  
by a & Mrs Sage are in hospital with  
cuts - broken legs etc. - Strange to say neither  
Charles or I were the least unnerved & we  
walked home without a word of a the All Clear.  
This morning so far 10 AM & streets  
just off to post his letter  
I was from Mrs. Nathan

## Letters from the Home Front

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE...

Fishing up a world-class Viking treasure

There will now be a short intermission

Southwold's year of collective delusion

Writing your personal history

From Southwold Pier to Britain's top double-act

Victorian property development on North Parade

Recent local books



SOUTHWOLD MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL  
Issue no 19 - June 2019

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CONTENTS

- The Viking Side Rudders in the Museum** - How they were found and why they are still a mystery - Bob Jellicoe - Page 3
- There will now be a short intermission** - advertising slides shown at Southwold Cinema -Barry Tolfree - Page 4
- 'The Wenhaston Millions'** - Southwold's year of collective delusion - Barry Tolfree - Page 5
- 'Gert & Daisy'** - Paul Scriven relates how Britain's best known '40s double-act started on Southwold Pier - Paul Scriven - Page 8
- Write your own Personal History** - by taking a leaf out of Cynthia Wade's book - Page 9
- Wake and his Successors** - Southwold surgeon and historian, Dr Robert Wake and those who succeeded him - Paul Scriven - Page 10
- 19th Century Property Development on North Parade** - David M Lee - page 11
- Wartime Southwold**—Letters by Dorothy Loftus to her son, Nicholas - compiled by Simon Loftus - Page 14
- Recent Books** - Page 15

***EDITORIAL***

It is always pleasing to have new contributors to our annual publication. This adds to the variety of subject matter and writing styles, and we hope, to the enjoyment of our reader members.

The page lay-out and the enhanced way in which this publication is now prepared for production, is entirely due to Barry Tolfree, to whom we are hugely indebted.

My thanks to all those who have written articles for us during these 19 years since I proposed such a publication and for the research which you have done to make this possible.

Do let us know what you think of our Newsletter and perhaps consider whether you can contribute an article for our 20<sup>th</sup> edition in 2020

*Paul Scriven*

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

We'd love to have the opportunity to publish it in the 2020 issue of SMHS Journal.

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

# The Viking Side-Rudders in Southwold Museum

## How they were found and why they are still a mystery

**In 1981 a huge and mysterious piece of ancient timber was recovered from the sea near Southwold. It happened again in 1986. These timbers have subsequently come to be regarded as the finest surviving examples of Viking side rudders in the world. The story behind their discovery is not without interest, as Bob Jellicoe explains**

In 1981, Robert *Dinks* Cooper, a well-known Walberswick fisherman, was trawling off Covehithe in his boat, *Expectation*, when something unexpected became entangled in his net. Such events are an occupational hazard when trawling and fishermen generally know where the underwater obstructions are located and how to avoid them. However, this was not a known place. Having raised the net a little, but unable to haul it into the boat because of its weight, Cooper towed it into the harbour. When he berthed, other fishermen, including William Stannard, helped him lift a long timber entangled in the trawl on to the river bank.

### Firewood!

Here it remained for three years, at times causing damage to boats during high tides when it shifted into the water. In 1984 Frank Knights, a Woodbridge boatyard owner, came to the harbour to remove an anchor that had been trawled up. He also took an assortment of wood offered to him which included the timber found by Cooper.

Sawing up the wood one Sunday morning for use on his fire, Knights asked a passer-by to help him lift the long timber onto his saw-bench. This man asked Knights if he could have it to incorporate as a design feature into a new bungalow that he was having built. Knights agreed.

Saved from the teeth of the saw but before it became part of the build, the timber caught the eye of a local man who had called round to the bungalow by chance. It so happened that this man had assisted at the excavations of Sutton Hoo and he recognised the timber for what it was. He immediately contacted the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, who took it to London for further examination and preservation.

### Beachcomber

In February 1986, following a heavy north-east gale, Ivan *Nobby* Hutton from Reydon, a keen beachcomber who liked to fashion driftwood, was walking on Easton beach looking for suitable pieces. To his astonishment, he found an exceptionally large piece of timber lying on the beach. With help from a friend and, once again, from William Stannard who loaned his truck, they managed to get the timber off the beach and to the harbour where it was put in Tom Martin's boat shed. Having had experience of the earlier rudder, this time they knew what the timber was. It was even larger than the previous find. They wrapped it in a foam carpet underlay and continually drenched it with water from a hosepipe. Stannard contacted Roger Maynard of the BBC who arranged a meeting with Gillian Hutchinson from The National Maritime Museum. It, too, was taken to Greenwich.

Radio carbon dating subsequently put the rudders between the ninth and tenth centuries. The first measured 3.91m long and the second 4.36m. Both have rounded shafts above wedge-shaped blades. A rectangular hole into which the tiller slotted was cut right through each shaft. Other holes in the blades were for attachment of the rudders to the ships' sides. These attachment holes are unique, differing from all other finds in that they are rectangular and show traces of iron, suggesting that a bar may have been used as a pivot to raise and lower the rudders. It is not known how such an arrangement might



*The rudder was attached near the stern of the boat on the starboard (Steer-board) side.*

*A model in the museum.*





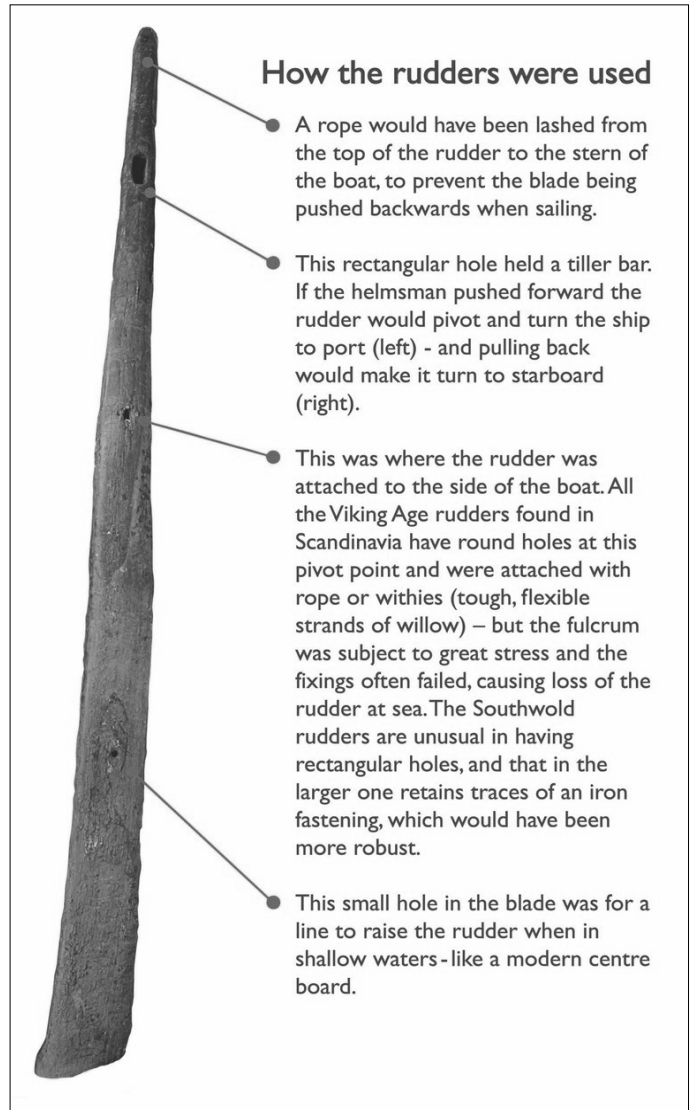
have worked.

The coincidence that two rudders closely resembling each other but made for ships of different sizes, found close to each other and within a relatively short time, poses intriguing questions. The exceptional state of preservation of both rudders when found indicates that they had been covered in silt. They showed little in the way of marine or biological damage which suggests that they had not become detached from their ships when on passage. Had this happened they would have floated and been washed ashore before they could have absorbed enough water to sink. One theory is that they went to the sea bottom when their ships were wrecked, perhaps at the same time. There they remained covered in silt until dislodged by trawl nets and ground swell. If that is the case, there may be two large ships in a similar state of preservation just off Covehithe. Another, perhaps more likely, possibility is that, given that the coastline a thousand or so years ago was 2-3 km seaward of its present position, the ships may have been lying in the mouth of the river course which connected the Viking harbour at Easton to the sea.

**A world treasure**

Whatever the truth, the fact remains that the side-rudders are the finest ever found, finer even than any in Scandinavia. Beachcombers and fishermen on this coast have often been instrumental in important finds whether, like these, from a mere thousand or so years ago, or very much older, providing evidence of life in Doggerland or even further back, to the deep time hominid presences and fossilised remains of various animals in the cliffs. See a world treasure in Southwold Museum.

*Bob Jellicoe*



**How the rudders were used**

- A rope would have been lashed from the top of the rudder to the stern of the boat, to prevent the blade being pushed backwards when sailing.
- This rectangular hole held a tiller bar. If the helmsman pushed forward the rudder would pivot and turn the ship to port (left) - and pulling back would make it turn to starboard (right).
- This was where the rudder was attached to the side of the boat. All the Viking Age rudders found in Scandinavia have round holes at this pivot point and were attached with rope or withies (tough, flexible strands of willow) – but the fulcrum was subject to great stress and the fixings often failed, causing loss of the rudder at sea. The Southwold rudders are unusual in having rectangular holes, and that in the larger one retains traces of an iron fastening, which would have been more robust.
- This small hole in the blade was for a line to raise the rudder when in shallow waters - like a modern centre board.

**THERE WILL NOW BE A SHORT INTERMISSION**

A fascinating addition to the Museum’s collection this year is a Gaumont Chrono film projector dating from around 1912, used in the early days of Southwold Cinema, generously donated to the museum by David Cleveland. David is the author of a new book charting the history of the Cinema, reviewed on page 15.

The museum has a set of glass slides dating from the 1930s carrying advertisements for local businesses. These would have been projected during intermissions. Here are just two examples with some background on the businesses concerned:

**Ernest Goldsmith** ran a pet food business from his shop at 50 Church Street—now demolished as part of the Co-op car park. At weekends he supervised the roller-skating rink in the Pier ballroom. The late Ronnie Waters knew Ernest well and told me that he was such a genuine lover of animals that local people used to ask him to treat their sick pets although he was certainly not trained as a vet. It was a role he came to bitterly regret when the



town was evacuated during the war and, in many cases, pets had to be put down. Many residents would trust only Ernest to do the deed. His methods of euthanasia were kind but unconventional. Ronnie told me the task broke his heart. In 1942, with hardly any animals or people left in the town, he shut up shop.

**Eric Tooke** had an extensive motor depot at the entrance to what is now called Duncan’s Yard. In addition to car hire, he ran a charabanc business featuring the ‘Wanderer’ Safety Coach, as well as a removals service. Eric also owned ‘The Old Vicarage’ (now Buckenham House) whose ground floor he converted into shops, letting the upstairs to an exclusive gentlemen’s club, ‘The Blyth Club’. In 1938 he sold The Old Vicarage to the Eastern Counties Bus Company and the following year he sold the garages to Abner Goddard who had motor garage interests all over Southwold. But just a year later the depot was requisitioned by HM Forces. The site is now occupied by homes, 10-14 St Edmund’s Road



More of these slides in the Museum’s Flickr archive on the website.

*Barry Tolfree*

# 'The Wenhaston Millions'

Southwold's year of collective delusion

**Early summer 1933, the lowest point of the Great Depression. In Southwold, tourists were in short supply and cash flow was looking scary everywhere, not least at the fashionable Marlborough Hotel.**

Then, one afternoon, into the hotel lobby strode a dashing Londoner in his early 30s. He signed in as 'Major Leonard T. Crane, CBE, King's Messenger (1st Class)'. Over the next few months he would make many more visits and each visit would raise the town's spirits and increase his fan-base.

First to fall under the Major's spell was the proprietor of the Marlborough herself, Mrs Mary Ann Waldorf. With her second husband, Mrs Waldorf also owned an up-market apartment block at Centre Cliff and a hairdressing salon in the High Street. Even more impressed was Mrs Waldorf's daughter by her first marriage, Muriel Mary Georgina. Poor Muriel had had a torrid few years: she'd married a Londoner, Frank Duke, and they'd had two children before separating. Now she and her baby boy were back in Southwold while her older daughter had been sent away to boarding school—another burden on the Waldorf bank balance.

## A regular and honoured guest

The Major lost no time in networking with the movers and shakers of Southwold and the surrounding villages. He attended local functions. He got invited to shooting parties and was bought drinks in the town's lounge bars. Everywhere he was admired for his dark good looks, his honest blue eyes, his military authority and his winning smile. One well-to-do household where he became a regular and honoured guest was that of Edward Percy Rawlins who, on his visiting card, styled himself 'Late Scots Greys'. Rawlins lived at Hawthorn Farm in Blythburgh. He was riding master to Saint Felix School and, until very recently he'd run the upmarket Southwold Riding Academy from Daisy Villa in Gardner Road. He was much taken with the entertaining Major Crane and Crane, in turn, was delighted to discover that the Rawlins' housekeeper was none other than the fetching daughter of his hotel proprietor, Muriel Duke. Indeed, it was not long before Muriel and Leonard were stepping out together.

One of the characteristics that Mr Rawlins found most disarming about Leonard was his refreshing honesty. Despite his impressive credentials he had not attempted to conceal the humbleness of his origins. His rank of Major, he explained, had been conferred by his former regiment, the Second King's Horse Guards, but he also referred darkly to his connections with the Secret Service. Some years ago, he said, he had set about raising a modest mortgage on his property in London. In the process he had had occasion to draw a cheque on his current account with the National Provincial Bank for the sum of £350. Although the account was sufficiently in credit, the cheque bounced. So incensed was Crane at this insult to his integrity that he put in a claim to the bank for damages. The National Provincial eventually offered him ex-gratia compensation of a few thousand



*The Marlborough Hotel in 1933*

pounds but Crane, far from satisfied, rejected the offer and decided to sue the bank for a sum amounting to tens of thousands of pounds. Alarmed, the bank, sought support from the Bank of England.

## 'The King and I'

At this point, said the Major, The 'Crown' came to hear about the case and saw in it an opportunity to humiliate the National Provincial Bank which His Majesty had never forgiven for refusing to sell War Bonds during the Great War. As related by Crane, he and King George V were to become co-litigants in a claim against the Bank for an eye-watering £850 million. Crane's share was to be a paltry £10 million (the equivalent of well over £600 million today) which was to be in gold bars, Treasury Scrip and Bank notes.

However, explained Crane, his own status as an ordinary working man was a potential embarrassment to the Crown who promptly arranged for him to be elevated to King's Messenger (1<sup>st</sup> Class) and Commander of the British Empire. Being such a sensitive legal case, confided the Major, it was heard in camera before Lord Sankey, Lord High Chancellor of England. Crane decided to conduct his own case and allegedly did so with such conviction and aplomb that Lord Sankey personally congratulated him and thereafter became his dear friend.

The Major's little audience was captivated. "And did you win the case? And did you get the money?" they wanted to know.

Major Crane smiled sadly... The claim against the bank was won alright but, unfortunately, through some bureaucratic slip-up, the moneys owing to Crane were inadvertently paid into the Chancery Court, and now he was faced with the complex and costly legal process of getting his millions out of Chancery, a process which at present he could not afford. However, he added, he would be prepared to share his wealth generously with anyone prepared to contribute to his fighting fund... let's say a £50,000 return for an investment of £650!



Crane told this extraordinary tale to many, and to any who doubted its veracity, he would produce sheaves of official documents validating his story. Most impressive of these was one unmistakably carrying the Royal Seal. It read in part:

*“1st day of October 1932. George V of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Dominions beyond the seas, King Fidei Defensor, Emperor of India, to our beloved Leonard Thomas Crane, Greetings. Be it known that our utmost displeasure has been incurred by the treasonable action of the directors, shareholders and board of management of the National Provincial Bank Limited, and that we have caused a trial in Privy Council to be ordered to determine between us and the aforesaid defendants, such trial to be holden at my House of Lords in the City of Westminster....” etc*

This was the clincher. Edward Rawlins gladly offered to invest £650 of his savings in the confident expectation of the outlandish returns promised by his friend.

He was not the first of Crane’s investors, nor the last. A few months before, he had met Robert Spindler, a shopkeeper in Camden Town close to where Crane himself lodged. It was Robert who advised Crane to try his luck in wealthy East Suffolk, providing him with an introduction to his two brothers, Oswald Spindler who ran a garage in Wenhaston, and William who was a market fishmonger in Southwold. Wenhaston had accordingly been Crane’s first port of call and the one that was to give the whole affair its popular name: ‘The Wenhaston Millions’. Oswald put in £385. In total, it was said, around 30 people in the Southwold area contributed large and small sums to Crane’s Chancery pot in return for life-changing slices of Crane’s Millions.

**Fast-track**

Meanwhile, the dashing Major had proposed marriage to Muriel, brushing aside her protestations that she was already married, saying that, with the assistance of his powerful friends, a fast-track divorce was in the bag. True to his word, within a few days, he showed her an affidavit, signed by the President of the Divorce Court himself, Lord Merrivale, indicating that the way was now clear for the decree absolute to be granted. The divorce itself, he explained, would be ratified in the ‘French Statutory Court’ following a short procedure in the English law courts. Major Crane took Muriel and her mother with him on a trip to London to show her the very court where the procedure was to take place. During the trip he wined and dined his fiancée generously, bought her expensive love tokens including what Muriel described as a ‘rather nice ring’ for £25 and a handsome engagement ring which he let her know had cost him a cool £40.

Mrs Waldorf, had already busied herself with the wedding plans. Major Crane explained that, to save time, he had purchased a Special Licence. There was to

be a big Church do in St Edmund’s on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January 1934, followed by a no-expense-spared reception at the Marlborough – where else! Crane himself took a keen interest in the plans; it was to be the grandest wedding ever seen in Southwold and the Major took the wise precaution of warning the police that a level of crowd control may be necessary. His best man was to be his great friend Lord Merrivale who had already done such a grand job in facilitating the divorce. Lord Sankey (Lord High Chancellor) had let it be known that his wedding present to the couple was to be a brace of race horses.

Leonard Crane announced that, a few days after the wedding, there was to be a second reception at the Savoy Hotel in London to which all his ‘investors’ would be invited and which would also be attended by all the judges of the King’s Bench Division. It was to be at this event that the grand share-out of the millions would be made. While, in the rest of England, the depression was deepening, in Southwold an island of optimism, expansiveness and affluence emerged. The housing market enjoyed a mini-boom, shopkeepers reported freakish spikes in business. One gentleman had purchased £200 worth of clothes, a local garage sold someone a Rolls Royce while a High Street electrical retailer took orders for 15 radiograms at £90 each. But the more Southwold spent, the more apprehensive it became.

**Anxiety mounts**

Early January 1934 saw a series of whirlwind guided trips to London during which Crane took some of his increasingly anxious principal investors to the Law Courts, Somerset House and the Bank of England by way of reassuring them that the money was truly on its way. The standard

procedure, described later by Oswald Spindler, was that the party would arrive at the distinguished destination and Crane would stride confidently in, asking his companions to wait outside. Some time later he would emerge clutching a document signed by an eminent figure and apologetically ask his friends for cash to pay some legal fee or stamp duty.

Back in Southwold, Leonard Crane and his fiancée made an appointment to see the vicar, the Rev R N Pyke. As a mark of his gratitude, he had already promised St Edmund’s Church the gift of two five-foot gold candlesticks. Rev Pyke was polite but sceptical – not just about the candlesticks but about the divorce decree which Crane showed him, bearing the signatures of Lord Merrivale and Mr Bosanquet KC. He was even less impressed with the Special Licence which Crane claimed he had secured for a tenner from the Consistory Court. Knowing that the Consistory Court had nothing to do with marriages, that marriage licences cost £30, not £10, and that Lord Merrivale had retired from the Presidency of the Divorce Division three months previously, the canny vicar called the local police.



*The dapper ‘Major Crane’.  
Daily Mail Oct 26 1934*

Realising he was about to be rumbled, the Major went to ground. But before doing so he called together all his investors and solemnly presented them with a document 'under the Official Secrets Act' (Remember, he was in the Secret Service!) which he had all of them sign, making them swear that they would reveal nothing of the story they had heard about the money or about the share-out they were expecting.. Thus, when reporters from the Daily Mirror, Sunday Graphic, Daily Mail and News of the World pitched up in town soon afterwards they met a very un-talkative community – as did the police.

By the time the Daily Mail broke the story, Crane had fled to London, taking Muriel with him. When he saw the paper, Crane was livid and immediately made to telephone the editor, saying that if they wished to know more about Major Crane's credentials they should telephone the War Office or Horse Guards. The unhappy Muriel was not convinced by this little telephone charade, noting that "no voice came over the other end of the wire." She determined to leave him for ever, hurrying off to Liverpool Street Station alone and in tears – but not before her fiancée had thrust into her hand a prayer book with the inscription : "To my beloved wife Muriel upon her wedding day, from her loving husband, Len."

#### The missing groom

Back in Southwold, the Wedding Day came and went with cake untouched, dress unworn, gold candlesticks undelivered. The only crowd control needed was for the hordes of reporters and photographers who had descended on the town demanding 'The Story'. But Southwold had not quite heard the last of Major Crane.

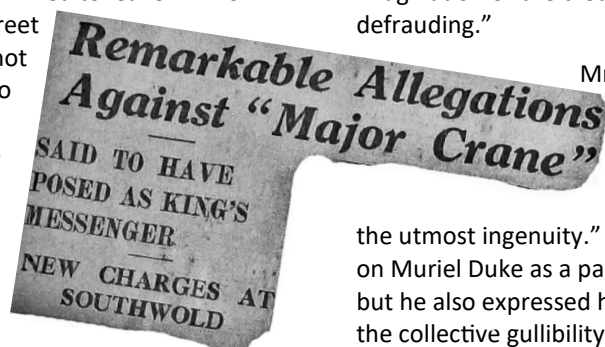
Edward Rawlins, Crane's most loyal and least sceptical friend and investor, received an anonymous phone call. It sounded like Crane's voice, said Rawlins, and what it said was that, although the planned big share-out at the Savoy had been unavoidably postponed, investors should not despair. Major Crane would be returning to Southwold that night, bearing with him 'a few million' to be going on with. Quickly Rawlins called a conference of fellow investors at his Blythburgh home. He told them it was true he was getting less hopeful of receiving the promised return but he had not yet totally given up hope. His friends could not share his optimism and they proved right.

A few weeks later it was the Sunday Graphic which finally tracked down the true identity of the mysterious Major. . . He was not a Major, nor a CBE, nor a King's Messenger of any class. Nor was he in any branch of the Secret Service. Nor, indeed, was his name 'Leonard Crane'. He was David Percy Caplice, a former timber salesman and occasional bricklayer and the Graphic had found his distraught parents in a small house in Stoke Newington. His father had a heart attack and died directly he heard the news. Mother, Florence Sarah Caplice, collapsed with shock but managed to issue an appeal to her son, via the paper, to give himself up. She couldn't believe her boy would have been capable of such ingenuity and chutzpah. He had been such a shy lad. He wasn't a total stranger to His Majesty's forces; he had spent a short time in the 'Lancers' but had been discharged on compassionate

grounds so that he could support his sick mother. He had even been married for ten years but his wife, Agnes, was now in an asylum.

#### Arrested

It was not until five months later that David Caplice was arrested and charged. He had attempted suicide but was now running a vegetable stall in London. He was remanded in Norwich Prison and appeared at the Southwold Police Court in July 1934 before the Mayor, Edgar Pipe, and a full bench of magistrates. Every public gallery seat was filled. He was committed for trial at the Suffolk Assizes in Ipswich on various charges of obtaining money by forgery and false pretences and of forging divorce papers. He pleaded not guilty but, by the time the trial opened on 25 October. He had changed his plea to guilty on all counts. The prosecuting council opened proceedings by stating: "When your Lordship has heard the case, you may wonder whether to be more surprised at the fertility of the prisoner's imagination or the credulity of the people he succeeded in defrauding."



Mr Justice Hawke, presiding, was indeed astonished and somewhat impressed... "Many of your frauds must have taken months and months to carry out and the use of the utmost ingenuity." He regarded the fraud perpetrated on Muriel Duke as a particularly "blackguardly thing to do" but he also expressed himself as somewhat bewildered by the collective gullibility of otherwise intelligent and responsible pillars of Southwold society. Caplice's counsel used this very fact in a plea for leniency, arguing that no one of any sense would have believed Caplice's fantastic stories, and would easily have been able to see through his lies. However, the judge would have none of it and sentenced Caplice to four years' penal servitude (hard Labour) for the fraud perpetrated upon Muriel. Several other shorter sentences relating to his many other fraudulent activities were to run concurrently.

The press tended to play up the extent of the losses suffered by the Southwold victims, referring to thousands of pounds when in fact the largest individual loss ran to only a few hundred. Popular rumour had it that Rawlins lost his life's savings and was a ruined man. This seems unlikely. But there is little doubt that the humiliation of the scandal took its toll on the people concerned. After the trial, the episode was little spoken about and quietly forgotten. Edward Rawlins, who had kept faith with the Major for longest, had most face to lose and went into a slow decline, dying two years later in June 1936, aged 60. Muriel did remarry in 1937, a man called Francis Smyth. Caplice himself, released from hard labour, went back into the building business, went bankrupt, was discharged in 1942 and married a woman called Mary John in Edgware in 1945. He died aged 52 at No 34 Fairmead Crescent, Edgware in 1954, leaving his widow effects valued at £533 (today's equivalent: £12,300.)

Barry Tolfree

*Sources include birth, marriage, death and probate records but narrative was compiled mainly from contemporary newspaper reports, including those in: Daily Mirror, Daily Mail, Sunday Graphic, Sunday Dispatch, Sunday People. News of the World and Eastern Evening News.*



# 'GERT & DAISY'

## From Southwold Pier to Britain's best-known double-act

There are two small collections of ephemera in the Museum Archives which provide some details of a popular comedy act which had its early origins in Southwold. Appearing with Harry S Pepper's "White Coons" Concert Party were Elsie and Doris Waters, better known as 'Gert and Daisy'. They later recalled that they were each paid £4 per week.

They were the sisters of Jack Warner (later known through 'Dixon of Dock Green' on TV 1955-1976) and went on to become some of the highest paid variety artistes of their day. They were all cockney kids, but the sisters had professional training including elocution lessons.

Local photographer, Frederick Jenkins, took their first professional photographs and their sense of humour is probably shown in this letter to him dated 15 November 1924 when he was Mayor:

*"Dear Your Worship,*

*Please may we have some more cards with address on -- say 50. We are constantly finding people who are silly enough to want to see our poor entertainment again-- We have run right out of cards so shall be glad of these as soon as may be convenient.*

*We have the honour to be, Your worship's most obedient servants,*

*Elsie & Doris Waters.*

*Best of love to the Lady Mayoress."*

They kept up a hectic touring programme of the music halls, writing most of their own material. They became regular broadcasters in programmes such as "Workers Playtime", travelled overseas (including Burma) during the war and appeared in 3 films in the 1950's. They also became recording artistes. The author has one of these 78 r.p.m. (Parlophone F306) on which are two of their well known songs and patter "In High Society" and "Wedding Bells". They were each awarded the O.B.E. for their wartime work in 1946.

Although the two sisters spent most of their lives in Steyning, Sussex, they never married. Their mythical husband and boyfriend were 'Bert' and 'Wally' and their neighbour was always referred to as 'Old Mother Butler' in their sketches.

In one of these small collections is an undated copy of an article written by the Revd. C.H. Sutton, vicar of Southwold, which is a tribute to Nurse Hughes, and headed 'Angel on wheels—much loved in Southwold by everyone'.

*Sweet nostalgia & happy remembrance*

*White & Wort*



Elsie and Doris Waters, a double portrait in the Southwold Museum archive.

*Nurse Hughes greatly admired two of the White Coons, Elsie and Doris Waters.... but in those days they had only begun to climb the ladder. In years to come Nurse Hughes kept up with them and they never forgot her, and helped her in all sorts of ways. As she grew old in her retirement with her sister in Headington, Oxford, she had little extra comforts from 'de Waters girls'. Towards the end of her life she was seriously ill in the Oxford Hospital and it so happened that Elsie and Doris were playing at the New Theatre, Oxford.... They went to see Nurse Hughes in hospital but she was unconscious, but looking peaceful. So they kissed her and tenderly crept away."*

Sutton's daughter, Mrs Cecily Brownsill, sent this article to the sisters who in a letter dated 15 November 1974 wrote;

*"Thanks for the article on Nurse Hughes. She was so good and concerned for us on the first time we had been away from home- and we could always be sure of at least one in the audience at the White Coons performances. She always sat in the gangway seat in the front row on the right looking from the stage. When our arms got terribly burned she doctored them and tied them up every night before we went to the show. We have been careful of sunburn ever since.*

*We loved Southwold and would have had a cottage*



*there had it not been a bit too far from London. We still keep in touch with several Southwold people..... including the Jenkins 'girls' whose father took our first professional picture and we could go on forever about Southwold and its dear people who contributed so much to our career.... "*

This is probably reflected in a Christmas Card with a picture of two elephants and two ladies, "*Elephants never forget..... and neither do we*"

There are in the collection some (3) later publicity photographs. Elsie and Doris writing on 16 January 1965 to the Misses Jenkins "*.....and all the fun we had all together in the upstairs room over the shop-all those years ago*".

Another written on 28 August 1978, (acknowledging a letter of sympathy) "*.....taking me back to the dear Southwold days and your dear father and mother and you young ones. Elsie*" Elsie and Doris sent Christmas Cards to the Jenkins 'girls' and these continued after Doris' death (aged 74 in 1978 ) by Elsie until her death in 1990 (aged 97).

After the death of Doris, Marjorie had sent a donation in her memory to the Concert Artists Association which on 13 September 1978 they acknowledged "*in memory of our past president, Doris Waters, whom we all loved*".

Here are some examples of the beautifully handwritten verse on these folded Christmas Cards:

*"Have a merry Christmas if you please. Enjoy it-don't be lazy, (We have had to put that last bit in) 'Cos it rhymes with Gert and Daisy".*

*"The Season's Greetings once again, And all the jubilation, But don't eat too much Christmas pud, And cause some more inflation"*

*"Eighty-six will soon be gone, And eighty-seven draws near, I wish you all you wish yourself, And those you love so dear, But first-the festival of all, Enjoy it while you may, For Christmas comes but once a year, And only lasts a day. Elsie."*

The earliest card (Christmas 1922) was of folded brown paper with a white insert which just said "*Best wishes from Elsie and Doris Waters*"

At Elsie's request , following the death of their brother Jack in 1981, sister-in-law Betty sent a small printed card with an illustration of the back of a police-sergeant, reading, "*Dear old Dixon's gone—he's taken his final call, The Golden Gates just opened wide, When he said, 'Evenin' All'*".

Paul Scriven (2019)

Sources: SOWDM. 2009:1-39 & SOWDM. 1994.73  
(Additional Information)

We are pleased to announce that PDFs of SMHS JOURNAL ISSUES 17, 18 & 19 may now be downloaded from the Museum's website:  
[www.southwoldmuseum.org](http://www.southwoldmuseum.org)  
Click on 'Members Area'

## WRITING YOUR OWN PERSONAL HISTORY

Cynthia Wade

In last year's Journal I suggested that it was a good idea to write your own life story for your family - that's if you have a family. My daughter, who is our family historian, has been reminding me that I promised I would write mine some time ago. As I have now reached the ripe old age of 80 I think I had better get on with it. I have had a few goes in the past but it all became rather rambling. So the other day I sat and had a think (sometimes I just sit, but this time I sat and thought too) for the best way to handle this subject. So I worked out what I have called a 'formula'. I made the following list: birth/health/schools/houses I have lived in/gardens I have had/marriages/family relationships, (this may need more than two pages depending on how large a family you had/have) Family and special occasions/close friends/hobbies and collecting (No I am not a hoarder) /jobs/holiday/books I have enjoyed/the war and other sad times/belongings/clothes/pets/winnings... I am not a gambler but I have won a number of window display competitions when my daughter and I had a shop. I also enter every year the Reydon Show which is held on the first Saturday in August in the village hall and have had success in their painting, needlework, flower arranging and photography classes. The list is in no particular order, some headings I have not included for personal reasons, they may show myself or other people off in a bad light. Most of us have made mistakes in our lives.

I then bought an A4 exercise book and put a heading on each page keeping the left hand side for the chronicle date. Thinking about the dates really gets the brain working—alright if you have kept a diary all your life but I never have! On the right side I have cut one cm. off the page of 25 sheets, one at a time to make an index. So let's start with my birth—don't worry this is only an example; I will not bore you with my life history, you have your own story to tell. It seems I was not a planned baby but I never knew that until my mother died. I was however a breech baby and some say I have been awkward ever since. I do remember seeing her wedding pictures dressed in white, which she destroyed but her marriage certificate shows she married in June 1938 and I was born in January 1939. The headings should start you on your writing journey and make you think about the changes we have had in our lives, good and bad. Here are a few more examples.

Special occasions: I am a royalist and one of the first occasions I went to involved spending the night on the Mall on November 20th 1937 when the Queen, then of course Princess Elizabeth, and the Duke of Edinburgh were married. I also went to view their wedding presents on show at St. James Palace as was her wedding dress. I got a gold star at school the next day for going to school that day. We had our first TV for the Coronation, a very moving ceremony, and remember the family together watching it. We camped out all night on the Mall for Charles and Diana's wedding but after that we had a better view on TV. From then on I have held parties at home with friends and neighbours. I have also included a 'belongings' heading as I do have some interesting bits and pieces. I shall note where they came from and also make a list of friends who may like one of my belongings when I have passed over. Hope you have found this helpful. It is said that there is a book in everyone; this could be yours.

# WAKE & HIS SUCCESSORS

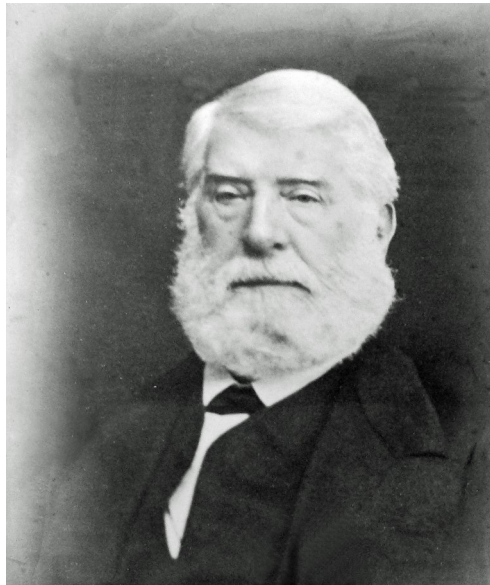
Dr Robert Wake who commenced his practice in Southwold in August 1836 was probably better remembered for his history, "Southwold & Its Vicinity: Ancient & Modern" (1839). This book was widely advertised, but a review in the Cambridge General Advertiser 18 March 1840 said he was no antiquarian and it was rather critical: "Many of the details in this work are no doubt interesting to those connected with the locality, yet we cannot refrain from expressing our regret on the expression of opinions which are uncalled for, and are calculated to give offence to all who differ from the author's views on local and political subjects."

Another 'tongue in cheek' piece appeared in the Suffolk Chronicle 29 May 1841:

"Southwold is fortunate in its local historians, as will be seen by the following extract from a paper dropped in the High Street of the town, the writer of which, like the Great Unknown 'blushes to his own fame', and for the present remains in obscurity, but there is little doubt that his work is preparing for the press, and from the present specimen of his descriptive abilities will, wherever it appears, be sought after with avidity:- 'Southwold is miserably dull, the inhabitants miserably poor, the society miserably bad, lodgings miserably furnished and (no, not miserably, but) extravagantly dear. So much for the place, its society, and its accommodations—now for the locality and its buildings. For the former, Nature has done much, man nothing, and woman but little: but that little is good, in the shape of a mansion called *Centre Cliff*, and the surrounding grounds &c., are laid out with some pretensions to taste, and evidently are the result of some thought and attention. The place is nearly an island of about a mile in diameter, and a very few yards more of encroachment of the sea on the northern boundary of the town will form it into a complete one. The only public building except the Church and sundry Chapels, is what is labelled (for people would never find it if it was not) a *Subscription Room*. To describe the architecture of this building would puzzle Inigo Jones or Sir Christopher Wren themselves. Its form is that of a grocer's wooden string box, with a hole in the top, and its size and appearance that of a parish round-house.' This brief and modernised description forms an amusing contrast with the elaborate and fanciful account recently published in the work under the title of *Southwold Ancient & Modern*." (i.e. by Wake)

He was a supporter of the Ipswich & Yarmouth Coast Railway proposal in 1845, a surgeon (with Mr. Sutherland & Mr Bird of Southwold) as well as an annual subscriber to the Southwold Medical Dispensary (1837) "Established with a view to afford the poor of the town and its neighbourhood with medical advice & assurance not in the Poor Law to give".

He became one of the four J.P.s (plus the Mayor for the time being) when Southwold had its separate Commission of the Peace in 1841, and High Steward in 1852/3. He resided at Tamarisk Villa, Queen Street (1861) with his wife Charlotte and a cook and a housemaid. (1861). He was an agent for the Mariners' & General Life Assurance Co. of London (1845)



*Dr Robert Wake 1801-1880, from a framed photograph in Southwold Museum commemorating his year as Mayor 1840-41*

In April 1840 Edward Spence, a mariner, had the misfortune in having his hand so shattered from the bursting of a blunderbuss which he was firing off from Blackshore Quay as to cause immediate amputation - operation performed by Dr. Wake and a Mr. Bradfield.

In 1847 he exposed an imposter, a Dr J. Wolff, chiropodist, who purported to have been a member of Academies in Paris, Copenhagen etc. Wake did let Wolff, who had been based in Norwich, attend to his own corns and

recommended him to his friend Mr. W.C. Fonnereau of Christchurch Park, Ipswich. At Southwold within 2-3 hours he had extracted £11-£12 from 4 or 5 principal inhabitants. However, it was found that he was a doctor of languages not chiropody.

In 1848 Wake (who left the town in 1867) was succeeded by James Williams, surgeon, who remained until his death on 9 January 1872 aged 46

Williams who lived in the High Street (1851/1861) was born in Middlesex in 1817 and his qualifications were F.R.C.S. and L.A.S. surgeon.

Next came Dr. E.R. Blackett, who had been apprenticed to a surgeon uncle, William Owen, and in 1855 was an assistant surgeon in the Madras Indian Army. Returning to England in 1861 he attended Queen's University, Ireland, graduating M.D. after which he came to Southwold. He became a J.P. , and a town councillor in the elections of 1869.

Prior to this, The London Daily News (18 Nov 1858) stated : University College Hospital – ....the treasurer announced that they had received £500 for the hospital from Capt. Charles Rayley R.N..... On Rayley's nomination, Mr Edward Ralph Blackett, house surgeon to the Suffolk General Hospital, Bury St. Edmunds, was constituted a life governor of University College Hospital. Blackett was appointed acting surgeon to the 1<sup>st</sup> Norfolk (Southwold) Artillery Volunteer Corps in 1882.

In 1864 he was treasurer of the Sailors' Reading Room and on the death of his aunt, Mrs Rayley, the ownership passed to him in 1871. In November 1870, Blackett moved from High Street, Southwold to High Street Wangford, where he died at the age of 58 in 1893 and where he was buried.

Southwold Town Council owns an oil painting by Blackett "Southwold Seafront at the Sailors' Reading Room". It would be interesting to learn whether any other works by him exist. He often participated in local charity concerts, normally doing readings.

Another Southwold practitioner at this period was Mr F.H. Vertue, who was admitted L.S.A (?) in 1849 and became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1860. He married in 1852, Henrietta Maria the daughter of another surgeon of the town, John Sutherland. In 1861 Vertue was living in Queen Street and shown as M.R.C.S. London, L.A.S. London and practising as a surgeon. By 1863 he was living on South Green, presumably at the Red House which he occupied until his death in 1894. He was buried in the family grave at Knodishall.

Various historical notes will be found initialled F.H.V. or M.H.V. (his daughter) which show their interest in local history. After the death of Eustace Grubbe who had owned them by 1900, the diaries of James Maggs were acquired (in

1909) by Miss Henrietta Maria Vertue. At a later date Andrew Critten bought the diaries and had them repaired and rebound. Inherited by Miss Yvonne Hatton she presented them to the Museum in 1973.

*Paul Scriven (2019)*

There is a 4 pp compilation of notes (Paul Scriven 2013) on Mr. Vertue in the museum-following a visit to Knodishall churchyard.

'Southwold & Its Vicinity' by Robert Wake has chapters with sub-headings but being packed with information it is often difficult to locate specific items. Jenny Hursell made a most useful index to this work for the museum in 2018.

*Among sources used in this article are:*

*The Diaries of James Maggs ed. Alan Bottomley SRS parts 1 & 2.*

*The Sailors' Reading Room; the first 150 years by Douglas Pope (2013)*

*Monumental Inscriptions Issue 1 (Suffolk Family History Society) (2005)*

## 19th CENTURY PROPERTY

### DEVELOPMENT ON NORTH PARADE

**Following on from the article on the property boom during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in SMHS Journal No.18, by Paul Scriven, I have notes on a development in 1884.**

The main contractor to construction of the Southwold Railway in 1879 was Charles Chambers, of Westminster, London (1830-1903) who had previously built railways in Mid-Wales, continuing to do so after the Southwold Railway opened.

In the 1880's the Southwold Corporation sold part of their land north of the town, when the first part of North Cliff Estate was sold by auction on 19 June 1884. Seven plots were offered when Charles Chambers bought Plot No. 5, measuring 60ft x 277ft for £150.

Chambers built three houses in December 1884 – January 1885 for a total cost of £2,132. 6s. 2d (£2132.31p), being 1, 2 & 3, Northernbay, numbered later as 23, 24 and 25 North Parade. These were assessed for rates at £53.5s.0d (53.25p) each. The buildings are still very distinctive with coins in brick at the corners.

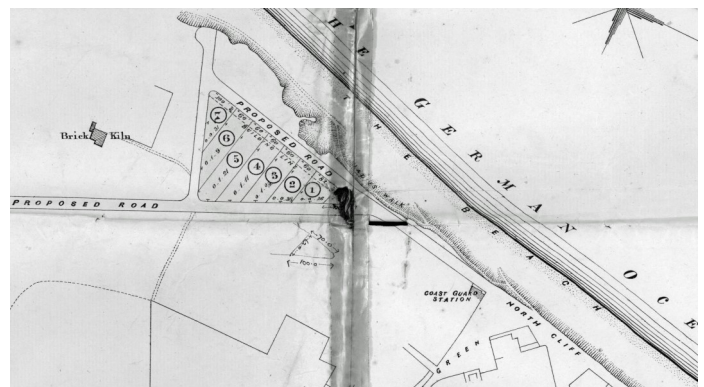
No information is recorded as to their subsequent occupation but it is assumed they were let on leases, as sales of the properties state on their Title Deeds that they were built in December 1884.

Subsequent sales from 1919, when Chambers' daughter Florence, on 18 September, sold 23 North Parade for £750 to Miss Edith Pretty, who in September 1927 sold to F. Alexander. 24 North Parade was sold in March by Chambers' Executors for £650 to Mrs A.M. Evershed, widow., The last

property, 25, North Parade was sold by his executor Walter Chambers to Mrs L.S. Harrison for £875 in March 1932.

*(This information was compiled from the Chambers Papers archive)*

*David M. Lee (2018)*



*Part of the plan of 1884 (somewhat battered and repaired) showing the North Cliff Estate with the numbered plots being offered for sale by Southwold Corporation. (Original in Southwold Museum)*



*Nos 23, 24 and 25 are the three houses on the right of the picture, equating to plots numbered 1, 2 and 3 on the 1884 plan*

# Wartime Southwold

Extracts from letters of Dorothy Loftus to her son Nicholas  
compiled by her grandson, Simon

*Dorothy Loftus was living at this time at Reydon Covert, the family home just outside Southwold, together with her sister Margaret, who preferred to be known as 'Charles'. Dorrie's husband Pierse (Chairman of Adnams brewery) spent most of each week in London, as an MP attending Parliament – and both their sons were away. Reydon Covert had a large garden, trees, stables etc, but most of these gardens and outbuildings were commandeered by troops sent to guard the coast. Dorrie's health worsened in 1942 and she was often away in more peaceful parts of the country, to have medical attention or to recuperate. She died in November 1943, hence the absence of letters from the latter stages of the war, when Southwold once again came under heavy bombardment.*

Simon Loftus

## 1940

**Tuesday** [undated but probably May]  
Southwold is unrecognisable on the beach but I believe there is a tiny enclosure left by Sam May's – so one can squeeze through the barbed wire on one spot to bathe! Round this house is barbed wire as there is a gun in the field – one cannot find any place to exercise the dogs except the lanes. I was challenged on the Bridge the other night coming back from Red X work. Of course I had got my identity Card – but – the Sentries were quite reasonable.

We get a good bit of shaking at times & the planes seem to hum all night. Many have left – the Miss Leighs, Violet Whitaker & various people - I suppose the sight of barricades, Bren guns, trenches & tanks put the wind up the nervous.

### May 31st

You ought to really see Southwold. We call Gun Hill Trinity Fair as it has such queer contraptions on the grass. They look like roundabouts – but the whole hill is barbed wired – so one cannot do more than gaze from afar – very Hush hush.

The Bridge is mined into the Town & the place bristles with guns. One is challenged after dusk. The 30 odd men who sleep in the studio were up all last night but it was I expect a false alarm – [illegible] – invasion!!

St Felix has gone lock stock & barrel. Likewise Bees has migrated to Ambleside – which one might now call Southwold by the Lakes – as Mrs Cordeaux, Borham,

Pritchard, Billy Brays, Smiths, Stephenson's, D'Arcy Hutton, Vawdrey, Lees Browns, etc, etc have most of them gone there. The shop people think of closing down – if this goes on & if the Southwold children are also ordered off as evacuated then a lot of mothers will depart too. It's rather sad our Air Raid Depot is so depleted I shall have to go down practically every day soon – as it has to be manned & even Mrs Mills says she must go & take her mother (old Mrs Adnams) off.

Lately we have had less noise overhead – one can hear the nightingales piping away each night – sometimes however drowned by the drone of planes.

I was going into the Hospital for practical work – but it was evacuated yesterday – obviously to make room for the wounded.

Your friend Mr (Bee) Miller has been arrested for sketching. This gave rise to such rumours – that soon he was to be listed as a German not Miller but Mullar. I believe he took action for slander – but it was hushed up!

*[Miller was a beekeeper, who looked after Nico Loftus's hives in his absence]*

### Monday June 17th

I am trying to rush through my hospital training – I passed in the Advance Military Nursing Exam 2nd. The first marks were 96 out of 100 & I got 95. There were 12 entrants & very few got over 70. I want if evacuated from here to get into some Hospital as Auxillary - & if I do my 50 hours I am ipso facto a V.A.D. & liable to be called up – anything better than sitting still. There is plenty here to do – but if we have to go then I might at least relieve some tired out Nurse – for one would be blind not to realise the work there

will be to do – even for people as old & inexperienced as myself.

*[Dorothy Loftus was 60 years old at the time of this letter]*

**22nd June** (No date on letter, but can be securely dated by mention of Churchill's visit to Southwold)

Life at times is difficult to face – but we must not aid Hitler by giving in. When one is tired from bad nights I think I feel at lowest ebb. I used to go out then & garden but there is no place now in this bit of ground where one can be free to



*Dorothy (Dorrie) and her sons Murrough (left) and Nicholas Loftus at Reydon Covert in 1941.*

even dig – except among the vegetables. I expect Daddy has told you we are practically a garrison. Round by the stables it's quite a sight with enormous iron stoves cooking for these men & the stoves – by Jove they do themselves well. I saw their dinner last night – new potatoes, lovely greens with their joints & huge creamy milk puddings. Two eggs apiece & bacon for breakfast. The cooking seems to go on all day long. The drive is so cluttered with lorries one can hardly get by. Despatch riders tear up night & day, in fact night is almost noisier than any other time. We have sentries posted at the gates so I never now bother to lock up.

We sleep now in the cellar – each night – complete with carpet – pink shaded lights & more or less converted into a drawing room as it has all been cleaned up – whitewashed & a most marvellous exit made into the Dell – below the holly tree. The soldiers worked from 8 pm till 2 am last night covering the exit with sandbags, corrugated iron & earth – if the raiders were directly over us - & we had time - we could go into this part. We don't really sleep much. Sometimes we go up into the kitchen & cook (I made a very good batch of bread the other night) but it is pleasant if one feels like sleeping to have a place to go.

The Town is a desert. Daddy will have told you how one & all have fled. On the front (North Parade) this morning – there was not one single person. Yesterday Southwold had in its loneliness a thrill – who should arrive down at the Swan but Winston! & now in the Swan Visitors' book is Winston Churchill's name. I knew Big Wigs were expected & had ordered a cold lunch & thought it was only [General] Ironside again – rumour says Anthony Eden was there too. Miss Edmunds did not know who was with Winston at lunch – several men – but Ironside & Gort came later. It really looks as if they did think this place pretty vulnerable. They made a complete inspection of the defences. One wonders if they were really approved of – but how can people like the PM judge?

We are wondering if Eden went back & broadcast "Stay put" as he did last night after hearing of the flat spin of people here? Even Dr Ayles & Dr Collins have gone!! There still remains however the Philpotts, Daniels, Fanny Foster, Miss Stephenson, the Pykes, & ourselves. I think, from 3000, we are now under 300 in Southwold & I hear Reydon is probably also coming under the evacuation orders. So I suppose there will be a panicky crowd here. Personally I mean to remain & then leave as directed if obliged to go.

These last 2 nights the Raiders have gone further afield – so we have had no bumps or bangs. They are only likely to jettison bombs on us – on the return journey – & until the big attack begins it is no more dangerous here than in any Midland town I think – besides what is one's life anyway? I have left off thinking personally of anything very much. It's of this country as a whole & its future that matters. At this moment things seem terribly dark & common sense tells one that we have a very poor chance of coming out on top – but all the same I refuse to accept the thought that some miracle will not happen.

### Wednesday July 24th

We have not had Siren nights recently - That contraption acts unaccountably! We had a dose of it for some days & though

bombs were dropt at Dunwich on Sunday night & the old Boche planes go over our head on their evil courses every evening - suddenly we are siren-less. Also the Invasion scare is in abeyance. We were rather more cheerful – but a lugubrious Admiral has dashed our hopes. He says we are shockingly undermanned here – that we need more men (pass this on to Daddy) & the Germans have only to bomb the beaches, explode the mines before landing & walk calmly in, & he thinks Southwold is the weak spot for this effort on their part!! Please destroy this letter when read – who knows what 5<sup>th</sup> columnists you have in your midst.

I do not think I can go to London while this tension is on. Somehow I should be too restless, then it is dangerous to leave the house for this batch of soldiers are pretty awful – some must be gaol birds. They break in & loot everywhere – just steal & destroy. The Melhuishes have a little cottage in Reydon – the troops broke in, destroyed & broke everything in the house, tore out the stove, put it in the garden & cooked with it. They looted Percy Whitaker's cellar, broke the china & threw it out the window. St Felix is in an awful state – doors torn down. They have pulled down the staircase at the Marlborough Hotel – to go to the first floor now one must use a ladder. I don't feel I love Lancastrians!

Those here are not too bad – as we have Captain Rimmer in the house – but round by the studio the place is devastated – even the Lily pond is polluted with filthy water (this was more than I could bear & I've written to Capt. Rimmer about it). They broke open a box Mrs Blum left in the loft (all locked up & addressed) – took out her precious Samovar, have lost completely the top of it, dented the brass basin – I simply don't dare think what the poor woman will say. The place has been scoured for the lost portion – no avail – probably they threw it in the rubbish dump. Yet I expect these men will be wonderful fighters, brave to the last. It's extraordinary what complex characters these sort of men are – I don't believe they realise that destruction of other people's property is unfair. They have been brought up in communist schools in these big towns. All the NCOs complain of their lack of discipline. That's a tragedy as bravery without discipline means unnecessary loss of life.

I am trying so hard to raise enthusiasm among people for keeping pigs, now all the restrictions are raised & now we can again kill & cure our own. I expect it's the uncertain state of the inhabitants – they don't know from day to day if they will be here. I am certainly going to fatten up my pigs & kill & cure them. I'll be able to send you bacon.

### August 13th

The usual here – Sirens – but nothing noisy – I wish Hitler could have a photograph of Southwold after the Siren has gone. The only time there is a sign of the inhabitants that remain, who go onto the Front & gaze out to sea or up into the sky! Certainly here are no signs of nerves – whereas Mrs Vulliamy (who was down for the day to dismantle her commandeered house) tells me they discontinued the Siren in Cambridge because the people got hysterical!

### August 16th

Yesterday evening Admiral Taylor motored us out to Wolsey

“...who should arrive down at the Swan but Winston! & now in the Swan Visitors' book is Winston Churchill's name.”

don't dare think what the poor woman will say. The place has been scoured for the lost portion – no avail – probably they threw it in the rubbish dump. Yet I expect these men will be wonderful fighters, brave to the last. It's extraordinary what complex characters these sort of men are – I don't believe they realise that destruction of other people's property is



Bridge marshes – just this side of the White House Bulcamp – on that high field to see the craters & they were an illuminating factor as we saw the new anti-personal bombs' havoc. 5 of this sort & 4 High Explosives (it was the latter that made me jump off my divan at 2 am in my sleep!). The anti-personal are fiendish. The jagged bits of metal are about 2 inches in diameter – heavy & sharp as razors. The bomb makes no hole (it's only intended for humans) & it cut the heads off the beet in the field as if it had been scythed. I almost query if one lay flat whether one could escape being cut to ribbons. Why the Raider wasted these bombs on the marshes beats me. Admiral Taylor thinks he must have taken some new high posts as the outline of an aerodrome.

I also heard something of the new gas from a girl at the Depot whose brother has done the Course. They actually have to have a dose of the real thing. It's very peculiar it affected some – & others not at all. It has no smell, but on those affected it was pretty grim as it makes one want to commit suicide & they had to shut up the men in padded cells! Of course these are tales – she swore to the truth – but these days one is very sceptical.

Last night the Siren went off 10 minutes after the bombs dropt, we believe near Beccles, but the night was hideous with planes roaring overhead, round & back & forth.

**Wednesday (21st Aug)**

Well, well, we had our Baptême du feu yesterday twice. Once about 3 o/c in the afternoon, 2 High Explosives several incendiaries. The HEs fell in Hotson Rd & Pier Avenue, breaking all the adjacent windows, blowing in doors, tearing tiles from roofs – but no one hurt – also falling in the Garden of the Grand Hotel. We went down to inspect the damage & got the second dose – Charles & I in the open & right over us, only luckily as the plane was going fairly fast the bombs flew backwards & tore off the back of a house in Field Style Road – made more craters at the Grand Hotel – broke the windows of Glacedidon[?] & Mr Harrison's house on the Front. We were just past the Home Knit when I spotted the brute over the Wilmer Garden making straight for us. I said to Charles It's a German – but before I got the last word out Screaming bombs fell, 2 incendiaries by the Old Station & one in the marsh in front of the Stella Peskett. By the time we got to the SP [Stella Peskett] the Raider was well away towards Blythburgh. In each case the Siren sounded too late & the last one came just after the All Clear went.

Old Mr & Mrs Balderson's house was smashed & they & Mrs Sage are in Hospital with cuts, broken legs etc. Strange to say neither Charles nor I were the least unnerved & we walked home not waiting for the All Clear. This morning so far 10 am 4 Sirens.

**Thursday morning (22nd August)**

The news from the Front Line here is 5 or 6 bombs dropt at 1 pm yesterday (just before lunch) over Walberswick marshes & they say the 18th hole at the Golf Course. We had wireless

on here having just come in & heard nothing!!

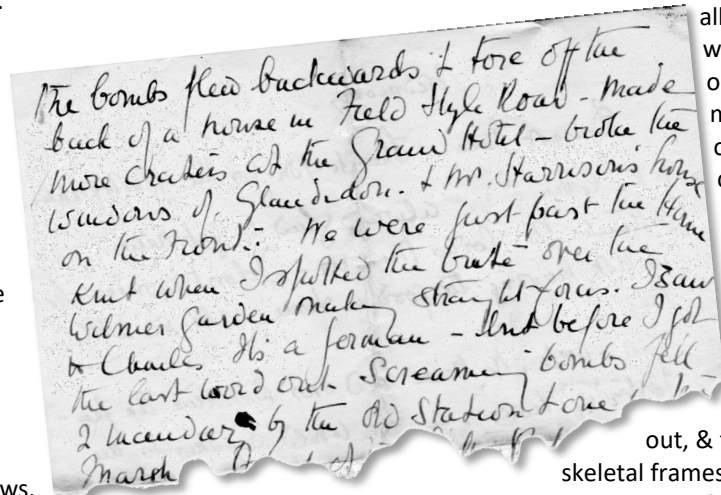
Then the Co-operative Stores at Lowestoft were demolished at about 4.30 yesterday afternoon I hear. Whether the people killed (6) were there or in some adjacent cottage I don't know.

The German plane was over us while we had our W.V.S. women sitting in the garden at about 3.30. I wondered whether I should suggest to these elderly ladies to practice throwing themselves on the ground, but felt it better to say it was an English machine – tho' I was pretty sure I recognised the grunts of the brute - One was brought down at Kessingland.

The usual night signals – but no noises to disturb us. This new effort will clear Southwold still more. Miss Cleveland has gone & I think Collings leave today. No children even have been told to leave Reydon.

**Undated (probably 23rd August)**

Daddy arrived down this evening to visit the scene of devastation. It's indescribable. St Andrews does not exist at all – there is a heap of rubble, with half a table leg sticking out of a twisted wire mattress, no building on the other side of the little courtyard which is now a crater 18 feet deep. One clammers down over the debris into Ludo's [Ludovici's] garden – not a pane of glass in the place intact – the windows of the house facing the garden all out, & the glasshouses have a few skeletal frames. Mattresses are lying in the



cabbages right down the side of the garden – the tiles off the roof – even the Brewery stables in Mill Lane are damaged. As for Lorne Road itself, there is not a window pane left intact – nor in the greater part of Park Lane. The Grubbe's house has all the windows out in the front & the Mackesy's those at the back. As for the roofs – it looks as if one had taken a huge rake & raked off all the tiles on every roof – so that one sits on another. The 2 bombs in Lorne Road were the heaviest there are – 500 lbs – How people are alive I don't know, except so many houses were empty. Mrs Jones (Brewery) had a narrow escape – all her back garden is just piled up with bricks, & the back part of the house demolished. She got into a cupboard under the stairs. One of Baker's windows (on Pinkneys lane) was broken also the Red Lion roof has plenty of holes. The Bray's house has no glass in the windows – but it's the poor Ludo's back & front – no compensation till after the war. It's really tragic for them as there is Miss Cohen's now empty & Dr Andrews no more & they will have to repair their own house, otherwise the contents will be completely ruined, especially as it has turned cold & wet & the rain must be driving into the rooms. No one can compete we think with all this damage. Little Baker looked a wreck & even Parke seems wonky. I hear there was a most tremendous exodus yesterday – Mrs Bray arrives today to remove her furniture & I saw Tooke's van again heavily laden. Admiral Taylor can't think what the plane was after – those 500 pounders cost an

enormous amount & this plane had been all day in and out of the clouds – quite low over Southwold. Every time the Spitfires arrived it dodged into the heavy low clouds to emerge and go on with its evil doings after they had passed. This hide & seek went on all day – sometimes it went to Lowestoft to kill 6 people there – both lots were in the air raid shelters & got direct hits - & then it plastered a few bombs on the cliffs at Pakefield on its return here. As Admiral Taylor says, “it was a determined attack on Southwold” heralded by Haw Haw that night on the wireless as demolition of Southwold Harbour.

Today the Siren has up to date gone just eleven times since midnight. Having a Bath these days is a game. One listens for the “All Clear” rushes into the bathroom & hopes for the best. Generally I ask Charles to listen & tell me if the Siren goes while the taps are running – I do object so to feeling I might be caught in the bath.

I’m not going to be much in the Town while these Tip & Run raids last – as that bit over the bridge is none too pleasant with no cover & the road is hard to lie down on if they machine gun us.

### Wednesday Sept 4th

Here the men are having a bit more leave. Amusing erections like miniature Eiffel towers are rising just before St Felix School – no one knows their use, not even Admiral Taylor. They are connected the 2 of them by immense steel cables.

I am just off to the Stella Peskett. The usual routine probably – Siren – then rush to get sterilisers ready, etc etc – then All Clear & carting the whole lot back!

PS. Matron’s nerves gave in & she is gone, poor thing.

## 1941

**May 17th** (probably misdated and actually written on 16th May, referring to a raid on the night of 11th/12th)

What a night!!! From 2 to 3.15 am the bombs dropt every few minutes & ended up in Southwold. That no one was killed was a miracle. Sharman the police had his foot off - & there were lots of cuts etc. The bombs fell outside (& a little nearer to the Main Street) by the Cinema. The Kings Head got all its back premises battered. The little houses opposite the Cinema uninhabitable also that row facing the Main Street by Winters. All Winters’s windows gone – plus Parkers house and adjacent houses – right up past the Post Office – another bomb exploded opposite (Allens’ stonemasons yard) & another on the soft ground beyond Fordux Mills – breaking and putting out of commission most of those little houses en route to the Hospital – most unpleasant but it might have been much worse – but luckily there were no incendiaries only H-E’s.

### May 17th

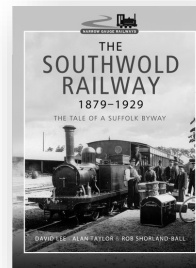
2 Blitz in one week! Last nights was very spectacular – I was sleeping upstairs & saw all the show from my room – It began about 2.30 am with the whistle of bombs over the house – & the most ear splitting crashes – when we looked out over Southwold the whole town seemed ablaze – thousands of incendiaries & as light as day – the sky overhead lousy with planes. Soon there was a most terrific concentration of fire and one knew some huge building was alight – we thought the Brewery! But it was St Edmunds Hall

which got one bomb & in ten minutes was no more – also a house unoccupied in Hotson Rd was burnt out but the wardens were splendid & got all the rest under control. The aiming was accurate and the craters (the biggest ever) were within a few yards of the Water Tower. The blast was so terrific it threw Mrs Miller down in her house here - & broke the windows of Reydon Post Office – but this house seems to get protection from its trees so far.

It’s queer with me – I can’t bear anticipation but once it really gets going I feel as cool as possible - & as the bombs screamed over the house (they were released 3 miles back and passed – so the Reydon policeman said – right over us) I did not turn a hair. One never knows how one is going to react anyway – though people who go through this nightly must be sure of themselves.

## BOOKS

### TWO LOCAL BOOKS OF 2019



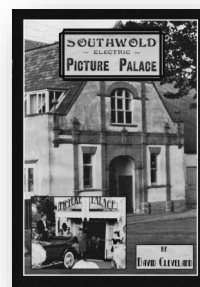
**‘The Southwold Railway 1879-1929. The Tale of a Suffolk Byway’ by David Lee, Alan Taylor and Rob Shorland-Ball**

248 pp ISBN 978 1 47386 758 1 (Pen & Sword 2019))

David Lee has been an enthusiastic researcher for many years of the Southwold Railway, on which, as a very

small boy, he once travelled. Thus a large amount of information and numerous illustrations have been accumulated with a hope that it could all one day be brought together in a book. This has now come to fruition in the hands of Rob Shorland-Ball. Many books have been written about this unique narrow gauge railway including one by Alan Taylor (d.2017) (co-authored with Eric Tonks) David and Alan first met in the 1950’s to share their interest.

This well produced and illustrated volume must surely be the definitive work on this subject.



**‘Southwold Electric Picture Palace’ by David Cleveland**

38pp ISBN 978 1 9993672 0 6 (2019)

This informative illustrated publication tells the story of the cinema in York Road which opened in 1912 and is written by someone whose knowledge of cinema and film was shown to an appreciative audience at one of the winter lectures to

the Society. With his work for the East Anglian Film Archive he travelled widely giving his talks and shows. He has given a Gaumont Film Projector to Southwold Museum (where it is on display) being one of the two he acquired from Southwold Cinema. This is an excellent booklet and will revive memories for those who enjoyed attending the cinema which, in its heyday, attracted patrons from a wide area.

Both these publications look at the present with comments on the new cinema and the railway project.

P.S.



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