



WALBERSWICK

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO: 52

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR'S REPORT

This newsletter concentrates on The Walberswick Scroll after the extremely successful "Day of the Scroll" on Saturday 13th May 2017.

Pat Lancaster

ARCHIVIST'S REPORT

Various things had been "on hold" recently but I did catch up with 2 outstanding matters: (i) on Wednesday 26th April, 2017, Vicky Manthorpe came to see me and viewed all my files on Charles Rennie Mackintosh as she will be doing an article for the Norfolk magazine and intends to come to the Autumn lecture, and (ii) I met with David Lee in Southwold who has donated a "plate" with the inscription "WPPC" and the number 6355 on the back. This was an item from the Walberswick Peasant Pottery Co. which was later bought by W F (Pink) Crittall (Crittall metal windows).

In addition, The Jessie Browton Diaries – actually entitled "The History of Walberswick" (in 5 volumes) - were borrowed from Southwold Museum. I have managed to scan them all, copied them and the resultant books are in the archives. I would say that the books have been scanned as they were presented to me in order that they may be returned to the Museum in their original condition. However, they do not seem to be in any chronological order. I have returned the originals to Southwold Museum together with a USB memory stick as a "thank you" gesture.

Pat Lancaster

A BIG "THANK YOU" FROM PAT KETT

To all the members of the History Group, I wish to say "Thank you" for the wonderful gifts which you gave me on my retirement as your Treasurer over the last 20 years – very much appreciated.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**BILL UNGLESS will give a talk on CHARLES RENNIE MACKINTOSH
and ESTER FREUD will talk on her research for
"MR MAC AND ME"**

- Saturday 21 October 2017

**PIP WRIGHT will give a talk on "FROLIC, FERVER AND
FORNICATION – TALES FROM THE PARISH REGISTER"**

- Saturday 9 December 2017

The Day of the Scroll (and John Doman Turner)

Saturday 13th May 2017 provided a unique opportunity for those interested in the Walberswick scroll and its creator, John Doman Turner (JDT). On that day, gathered together under one roof, were probably the foremost authorities on the subject and it was in Walberswick. The day started with multiple viewings of the scroll which was followed by a visit from ITV news and finally a chance to see, hear and question the experts.

In the morning a team of Walberswick enthusiasts interested in both the scroll and the Heritage Hut (HH) showed the scroll three times to enthusiastic audiences young and old. The HH is one of the buildings captured by JDT on the scroll (see right). In 1931 it was the home of the Working Men's Club. Previously it started life as a chapel and most recently was a visitors' centre. Since that time it has largely had no real identity. When the scroll was shown in the HH in 2016 it was realised what a lovely home it would make for the scroll if only the HH could be made secure and environmentally sound. In fact it would be a kind of "coming home" as the case in which the scroll is mounted started life as a football game in the Working Men's Club. However, the HH needs regular use for the benefit of all villagers to make the required investment worthwhile. This is a work in progress currently being driven by the "HH Committee" under the oversight of the WPC. Watch out for more information and detail.



In the afternoon the experts gathered in the HH for a special showing of the scroll involving a visit from ITV news. After much filming a feature lasting just over two minutes was televised the following Tuesday. You can view this if you have an internet connection by going to:

<http://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2017-05-16/an-artists-scroll-depicting-every-building-in-the-suffolk-village-of-walberswick-gets-rare-public-outing/>

While the clip refers to a "rare public outing" the reality is that the scroll can usually be viewed 2-3 times a year. This would be made even better if it could be permanently housed in the HH.

The same experts gathered in the evening, this time in the Village Hall, for the WLHG Spring Lecture. This was billed as “**John Doman Turner and the Walberswick Village Scroll**” and attracted a large audience. The experts gathered were:

- **Richard Scott:** Richard is a Walberswick resident, artist and “protector” of the scroll. For many years Richard has shown the scroll at regular intervals on the stage of the VH. He also included a large piece on JDT and the scroll in his book “Artists at Walberswick – East Anglian Interludes 1880-2000. Recently Richard penned a short article on the scroll to be developed as a pamphlet for scroll days. This draft is included at the end of this document. Richard can be seen at the left of the picture of the gathered experts.



- **James and Stephen Robertson:** This remarkable father-and-son team have turned detective to hunt down works and details of JDT, the man known as the “forgotten Camden Towner”. Their presentation revealed information about the life and works of JDT that would have remained unknown but for their diligence. They are hoping to make available a video of their presentation for those that missed the meeting. Look for this and other fascinating information on their web site <http://www.johndomanturner.com> – it’s well worth keep going back to check as information is added frequently.
- **Esther Freud:** Also a Walberswick resident, Esther wove details of JDT and her grandfather, an architect responsible for a number of Walberswick houses, into her novel “The Sea House”. In research for her book Esther read many letters written by JDT and gained an insight into the man and artist. Esther read passages from her book to illustrate her research.

It was a great evening revealing the results of original research. This was not a review of published information but the release, for the first time, of new information. We, the members and guests of WLHG, were privileged to be there to be witness to this.

Now read on for Richard Scott’s article on the Walberswick scroll. It is written from a uniquely Walberswick perspective and though more flesh has since been added to the bones of JDT, Richard’s work



contains memories of old Walberswick alongside details of JDT. Those old enough to remember 1950’s Walberswick will recognise much of the 1930s village despite war-time bombs and the devastating flood. Even in the 21st century not a great deal seems to have changed.

John English

THE WALBERSWICK SCROLL

This remarkable work is one man's view of Walberswick in the summer of 1931 but with some small additions in 1932, painted in watercolour on a roll of paper 123 feet long. The artist was John Doman Turner (1871-1938) who depicted every house in the village street and the riverside area in some detail, starting at the gamekeeper's cottage a mile to the west of the church. He then followed the route of the old narrow-gauge Southwold Railway, which closed in 1929, as far as the then-surviving Walberswick station building before moving across to the top of the main street. Here he continued his pictorial trail down its north side, around the Green and down to the river. Here he became engrossed with the riverside buildings, the steam ferry (dramatically scuttled in 1942) and the cluster of artists' studios along the river bank at the time. Then he made his way back to the top of the village, recording houses on the south side of the main street. The side turnings – Palmer's Lane, Leverett's Lane and Millfield Road – seem to be an afterthought, appearing as small pencil sketches inset at the top of the paper.

In the 1950s the scroll, wrapped around a wooden spindle, was kept in a cupboard in the Gannon Room which was, in all except name, the village hall of this period. The precious document could then be unrolled for inspection on trestle tables without prior arrangement, and was lucky to survive the great flood of January 31, 1953. The Gannon Room stood approximately on the footprint of the present village hall, with its long axis running north-south. Its architectural style owed something to the "tin tabernacle" tradition – except that it was made of wood. In 1953 it was not protected by the more recent flood defence bank, completed in the early 1960s, but it certainly got its feet wet in the flood as the water reached The Anchor sign. Luckily the scroll was safely stored in its cupboard.

Who was John Doman Turner?

In earlier life he was a stockbroker's clerk, living on Streatham Hill in South London. He devoted most of his spare time to producing a large quantity of watercolours painted with a rare quality of almost child-like directness, honesty and attention to detail. It has been said that illness can be an artist's friend, as it can allow time for solitude and concentration on the creative process. This appears to have been the case for Turner, except that his "illness" took the form of profound deafness, which appears to have had a similar result.

During the 1950s village elders remembered him, but generally they did not get to know him well because of his affliction. They knew he lived much of the time in London, and there were puzzling rumours that he had been a member of the prestigious but short-lived Camden Town Group, formed in 1911 but disbanded two years later. Not very likely, some of us thought, as all the other fifteen members of the group had a background of full-time art school study. There was also a whisper that he had been a pupil of Walter Sickert (even more unlikely, thought the doubters). A little research, though, confirmed that both rumours were true. For a brief outline of how all this came about, please read on!

In the early summer of 1908 the critic Frank Rutter, who knew Turner and was an enthusiastic champion of the artists who were soon to form the Camden Town group, had the inspired idea of suggesting to Frederick Spencer Gore, the group's first president when it was launched, that he might take Turner under his wing as a pupil. Rutter felt that this kind of guidance would be invaluable for Turner, while for Spencer Gore, who had courageously set himself up as a freelance painter after his studies at The Slade (despite great family pressure to re-train for a "proper" career!) such an arrangement might provide a modest but useful enhancement of income. Because of the obstacle of Turner's deafness, the agreed programme was a form of correspondence course. As often as he wished, Turner would assemble a bundle of work and send it to Spencer Gore, enclosing a list of twenty questions to which he sought answers, and a fee of five shillings. In due course the work would be returned with the all-important criticism and a letter with answers to the questions. The "course" continued for nearly five years, by which time the Camden Town Group had mounted its only three exhibitions, all at the Carfax gallery in Bury Street, St. James, and disbanded. Group members were allowed to show up to four works in each of these exhibitions; Turner showed his full allocation in all three. In the middle show (December 1911) one of his titles was *Walberswick*.

The Sickert connection was perhaps more easily explained. At around this time Walter Sickert was renting rooms in and around Fitzroy Street ("Fitzrovia" was a network of streets just to the west of Tottenham Court Road, known at the time as an artists' quarter) for the purpose of running life classes. Turner had mentioned to Spencer Gore that he was struggling to draw figures and faces, and the suggestion that he might join these classes may well have come from Gore, as he and Sickert were close friends.

When the Camden Town group disbanded in 1913 some of its members formed the nucleus of the eventually larger and different-in-spirit London group, which is still active. Turner chose not to go down this route, but he and Spencer Gore remained firm friends. Sadly, this would not be for long, as Gore died in March 1914, having contracted pneumonia following an extreme cold and wet day painting *en plein air* in Richmond Park. He was in his mid-thirties.

"The Forgotten Camden Towner"

These words were used in the advertising for a Turner exhibition in September/October 1997, at the Michael Parkin Gallery in Motcomb Street, Belgravia. Michael Parkin was, like many of us, a devoted fan of Turner and of the Camden Town Group in general, and was fortunate to have secured the services of Spencer Gore's Royal Academician son Freddie to assist with the assembly and presentation of the work and to write a short, sensitive and very informative essay to accompany the invitations.

The exhibition was a revelation, most particularly because it contained a number of life drawings produced in the Sickert classes. All had comments and criticisms from the master written in pencil around the sides of the paper. Among the fairly numerous landscapes and river views was the only Walberswick painting in the show. Dated 1911, this was Turner's earliest painting of the area yet seen by the writer. It was a view across the river to Southwold, with an extra dimension of historical interest. Moored near the North bank was the *Pendennis*, a steam-powered, paddle-driven tug used for various duties on the river but most particularly for towing the larger fishing vessels out to the open sea on calm days, and back in again at the end of their session. Previously the process was a laborious one called warping, which involved men with ropes on the river bank. Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth both had a "Pendennis equivalent" on the Waveney and yare respectively at around this time, performing similar duties. Before many more years had passed the fishing fleets had become motorised and thus more independent.

Was the Scroll a commission, or a labour of love?

There can be little doubt that it was the latter, and it seems likely that Turner either presented the finished work to the parish council, or left it in his will. As the scroll was almost certainly drawn and painted "on the spot" we can be fairly sure that he didn't wrestle with 123 feet of paper as he moved around, but appears to have dealt with it in a number of much shorter sections, joining them together later. There are a number of visible joins, some obviously his and some probably dating to the 1970s when funds were raised to have the work expertly restored and backed on linen. At this time there was heavy pressure to surrender the treasure to the County Archives in Ipswich, but the Parish Council, and most particularly its chairman at the time Ronald Coleman, fought a hard and eventually successful battle to keep it in the village, in a safe part of the new village hall. Several years later it was mounted in a wooden case which had housed a pub football game of the kind which was popular between the wars. The spindles were just right for the scroll and the installation was meticulously carried out by the late Tony Whittenbury. Most appropriately this particular football game had served its time in the Walberswick Men's Club, in the building on the Green which much later became the Heritage Hut. Currently the scroll is shown about three times a year, in 1994 it was a popular exhibit at The Walberswick Enigma, an exhibition at Christchurch Mansion in Ipswich featuring resident and visiting artists from 1801 to date.

Did Doman Turner produce any other scrolls?

To the best of our knowledge, three others. The first was the Southwold scroll, very much shorter than the Walberswick work, and completed a year earlier, in 1930. In 1933, having completed the

Walberswick epic, he embarked on another scroll, describing Southwold's annual Trinity Fair on South Green. Also fairly short, this one can be viewed by arrangement. It is wall-mounted, behind UV glass, in the function room at The Swan Hotel in Southwold. Finally, in the mid-1930s there was yet another scroll, this time with a circus theme. This was until recently the subject of rumour and speculation, but thanks to some diligent research by James and Stephen Robertson – see "Acknowledgements" – we now know where it is.

The original Southwold scroll is kept in the town's museum, but unfortunately it is too fragile for public showing, even by arrangement. On display in the museum there are some photographs of parts of it. Additionally, a good collection of transparencies survives locally in private ownership, so all is not lost. Turner did not attempt to portray the whole of Southwold; he confined himself to Ferry Road, a part he found particularly quirky and interesting. This is the road that runs behind the dunes from the bottom of South Green to the river. In 1930 it was notable for its line of unusual beach chalets, no two alike, running the length of the road and backing onto Southwold marsh. A few of these survive, albeit rather altered over time, but a number of them, particularly those closest to the river, were washed away in the devastating tidal surge in January 1953, in which several lives were lost.

Where did John Doman Turner stay when he came to Walberswick and Southwold?

Most visiting artists arriving in the village in the 1920s and earlier would simply book in at Bell or Anchor, which both acted as accommodation agents. Both had one or two rooms available, but the majority of high-season visitors were farmed out to local families who had an available room (some families put their children in makeshift attic or outhouse spaces to make this modest enhancement of income possible). It should be remembered that The Anchor was, until 1927/28 when the present building came into use, a small timber-framed building standing on what is now the forecourt. This was dismantled and re-erected with very little alteration to the original structure further up the street, and renamed *Anchorlea*.

It seems likely that Turner adopted the above booking procedure on his earlier visits to the village. At the time of writing the only definite detail so far recorded is that in 1922 he lodged with a branch of the English family at Harbour View, just off the Green. At this period there was a very substantial cluster of huts, previously used as net sheds or sail lofts, on the south bank of the river between the old steam ferry slipway and the present ferry landing stage, converted into artists' studios by their enterprising owners by the insertion of glass panels in their north-facing walls. Most were let for a summer at a time, and records are very sparse. Turner was keen to have a riverside studio which could also serve as his summer home. He achieved this aim at some time before 1930. It appears on his Southwold scroll of that year, standing on the north side of the river on what is now a car park between the Alfred Corry Lifeboat Museum and the river wall. It even had a name – Jane – thought to be a reminder of a female friend.

The writer recalls an unresolved disagreement in the Bell, circa 1975, between two village elders on the subject of "Jane". One said that she was a hut, while the other insisted that she was a caravan; they eventually agreed to differ. Sometime later there was a slide show in Walberswick of the Southwold scroll of 1930, depicting not only the "beach houses" along Ferry Road but also those on the north bank of the river. Jane was featured and it was clear that the elders were, in a sense, both right. She had started life as a caravan of the type popular in the 1920s, with a raised section along the middle of the roof, which allowed occupants to stand at full height. Her draw-bar and wheels had been removed and she had been mounted on a solid plinth. A "carahut" invented, perhaps?

What makes the Walberswick Scroll so special?

Quite simply, Turner just loved Walberswick, and portrayed everything he saw in searching detail. This even extended to recording carefully the many signs and advertisements he encountered during his progress around the village, and the very comprehensive tariff of charges for the steam ferry – rich sources of material for historians trying to construct a detailed record of life in the village in 1931. One sign which always causes some amusement at scroll showings is to be found at

the junction of Leverett's Lane and The Street. Parking was forbidden between that point and the Green – surprising to most of us, who had assumed that this was a much more recent problem. Turner's almost child-like attention to detail can also be found in the numerous flint and brick walls. A rather special example of the latter can be found at the Freud stables, where not only is every brick lovingly portrayed but he includes the carefully tapered course of bricks inserted during the build process to correct an accidental departure from the horizontal by the bricklayer (another example of this situation can be found on a cottage on the Green (see if you can spot it). Weathervanes were another source of interest, and they were apt to be drawn oversize (this is particularly true of those on the Southwold scroll).

One cannot help noticing that the architectural details of the church and of the Methodist chapel do not seem to excite Turner's curiosity as much as one might expect. A good example, next to the chapel, is a telegraph pole complete with carefully observed foot-pegs, ceramic insulator bobbins and a turned finial at the top (we are told that these were there to prevent the perching of pigeons; quite a number survive in parts of Suffolk).

We all come away from a scroll showing with our own impressions and memories. For more than 25 years I was involved in showing the Scroll, and even at the end of this time I found that I was spotting details not previously seen.

Acknowledgments

This is the tricky bit. For many years I absorbed snippets of information about Turner and the scroll from village residents, long before thinking of writing about them. Methodical notes of who said what, and when, were not made, so some omissions seem inevitable.

Village residents, now deceased, who provided information included Derrick Allen, Ronald Coleman, Vida Connick, Blucher English, Leslie Goodwin, Peggy Rogers, Bertie Stannard, Roderick Winyard, and also Pat Wythe, who enhanced showings of the scroll in earlier times by providing a side show of archive photographs and other relevant material. The most prolific contributor was Michael Parkin, who was most generous at the time of the "Forgotten Camden Towner" exhibition at his London gallery in 1997.

More recent contributors include John English, who has deep family roots in the village and now leads the small scroll-showing team, backed up by Pat Lancaster and William Ungless, while Luke Jeans produced the excellent scroll video, now converted to DVD. Julia Reisz frequently adds greatly to the interest of the showings with her first-hand memories of the village as a child in the 1930s, and Philip Kett, our official Village Recorder, has been a frequent and helpful source of useful historical detail.

Finally, our endeavours have been helped recently by the arrival on the scene of a father-and-son team, James and Stephen Robertson, who have devoted much time to in-depth research into Turner's life and work, which has included tracking down the hitherto mysterious fourth scroll.

Richard Scott

1957

END OF A 50 YEAR OLD SERVICE AT WALBERSWICK

The following article with picture was scanned from "The History of Walberswick" by Jessie M Browton - (as the text was difficult to read, it was retyped by Pat Lancaster)



A 50 year old link between Southwold and Walberswick will be severed by the decision to stop the delivery of bread, taken by Mr B C Newson's family following his recent death. Mr Newson had carried on a baker's and confectioner's business at Victoria Street, Southwold, and delivered bread to Walberswick for over 50 years.

Up to the outbreak of the last war, Mr Newson, his wife and family delivered bread with a pony and cart. Then when the ferry was put out of action, the bread was taken to the river's edge, rowed across to a hand-cart waiting on the other side, and delivered from this.

High tides and winds made it difficult to operate the boat regularly, however, and the son, Ben and the daughter, Winnie, decided to push a truck from the shop across the newly constructed Bailey Bridge – a distance of 2 ½ miles – three times a week, thus making regular deliveries in spite of the weather.

On one occasion – December 15th, 1950 – snow and ice made travel by road very precarious. Mrs Newson was already suffering from a sprained

ankle when Ben and Winnie set out to make their usual delivery. Hardly had they reached the Common gates when Winnie slipped and fractured her wrist and had to return to the shop. Ben, despite the strong wind, decided to go on alone with the loaded truck, but just before reaching the Bailey Bridge, was so overcome that he had to leave the truck and return to the shop. As soon as he arrived home – at about 4.30pm, he collapsed exhausted and the doctor had to be called.

The fact that there were many customers in Walberswick waiting for their bread urged him to make a second attempt and at seven in the evening, he decided to have another try. This time he succeeded in delivering the bread but did not get back home again until half an hour after midnight.

Only last year, Ben and Winnie had to dig their way through large drifts of snow, pulling a sledge behind them across the narrow Common footpaths on both sides of the river to deliver the bread made by their father.

Re-typed by Pat Lancaster