

EDITOR'S NOTES

Welcome to the summer edition of Backnumber.

We hope that you are all well but, as ever, we also understand that many of our members will have health issues or will be



caring for relatives and friends who are not in the best of health and we wish you all the best in those endeavours. Many of us have caring responsibilities for older and more frail relatives as well, which is one of the issues rarely mentioned when the popular media talks about “entitled pensioners”.

On 8th July the NHS will celebrate its 75th birthday. This, indeed, should be a cause for celebration but currently the service is on its knees due to a combination of COVID, 13 years of austerity and Brexit. That things have degenerated to the point where groups of health professionals, from junior doctors to physiotherapists and nurses to senior consultants feel it necessary to take industrial action to try to preserve their standard of living and the quality of the service, is quite astonishing. The word “unprecedented” is rather overworked these days, given the general state of our society and our wellbeing but it’s the right word to describe the position reached in the NHS.

There are many who believe that this is deliberate Government policy and many others who think it’s down to incompetence. There can be no doubt that COVID has had a devastating effect on the service and that no government of whatever colour would have been able to get through it without some disasters. As this editorial is being written, so the COVID Enquiry has begun its work, but that is expected to take several years to complete.

It’s first question is to address the issue of preparedness and we already know that the 2016 exercise (Operation Cygnus) on pandemic planning was not a success. We also know that the government and, in particular Matt Hancock, went to extraordinary lengths to keep the poor performance a secret.

Even when the NHS was being stretched to breaking point, it still proved that it could step up to the plate with the vaccine roll out. Hard on the example of the PPE disaster and the chaos visited upon us by the management of Hancock and Dido Harding it proved a wise decision to entrust the task to those who knew what they were doing. If the PPE procurement had been handed to public health authorities it is likely that the operation would have been more successful.

However, the thanks that NHS staff got for their unstinting efforts was to be applauded on doorsteps for a few weeks and then to be cast in the role of villains for looking to restore the value of their salaries and conditions. The danger now is that there will be a “brain drain” with qualified staff choosing to work in Australia or New Zealand. Replacements will come but mainly from countries whose health service is in an even worse condition than ours and, clearly, to the detriment of those populations they leave behind.

The NHS can only be rescued by a government with a serious commitment to save it and to invest in it. Thirteen years of Tory austerity has shown us that the saviours are unlikely to come from their ranks.

As ever, comments, letters etc to porterjames172@gmail.com

“It (the NHS) will last for as long as there are folk left with the faith to fight for it.”

Nye Bevan

KINGS LYNN

Kings Lynn acquired its regal name from Henry VIII. Previously it was called Bishops Lynn and was a major seaport in medieval times, one of only eight British members of the Hanseatic League. This was a sort of early E U , forging an alliance of northern European countries for trade and mutual defence. This stood Lynn in good stead as a maritime and trading town.

One sea captain from Lynn called John Smith was captured by the local people of what is now Virginia. He was about to be executed when a young girl, known as Pocohontas, intervened to save his life. There is much argument about the fact and the fiction of this event from around 1607 but Capt. Smith was released.



Pocohontas later met and married John Rolfe of Heacham. They returned to England where Pocohontas' life ended in 1617 in Gravesend aboard a ship bound for Virginia. She lives on, however, in history and legend, in the village sign of Heacham and in Disney's animated film.

Another famous name with Lynn connections is George Vancouver. He was born in June 1757 in what is now New Conduit Street, the son of the deputy customs officer. He joined the navy when he was only 14 years old and served some of his apprenticeship under Capt James Cook. He was given command of HMS Discovery in 1790 and went on to explore and chart the north-west coast of America. His detailed maps and charts included British Columbia, Alaska, Washington and Oregon and further afield to Hawaii.



Vancouver's other voyages included South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and China. On his return to England Vancouver was attacked in the press by the Prime Minister, William Pitt the younger, and physically attacked on the street by Pitt's brother Thomas because of alleged harsh treatment of crew. Vancouver declined to fight a duel, and cartoonist James Gilray satirised the affair.



A sad footnote is that Kings Lynn now has an extraordinary claim to fame.

"The simple truth is that our buildings are in a desperate state and have reached the end of their life. We now have **3,397 steel and timber support props** in 56 areas of the hospital. We now have more than six times more props than beds and we are the most propped hospital in the country"

<http://www.gehkl.nhs.uk>

IN OUR NEXT EDITION

Look out for David Button's next "Village Piece" this time on Tombland in Norwich and also Alan Cabbage takes a critical look at "British Values".

SCAMS

Scam prevention is an important part of our work at Norfolk Trading Standards. A scam is a dishonest scheme designed to cheat people out of money. Being scammed can have a devastating impact on the victim.

There are many types of scam with new ones appearing constantly and this makes it increasingly difficult to recognise a scam. It might be a scam if:

- ▶ it seems too good to be true – for example, a holiday that's much cheaper than you'd expect;
- ▶ someone you don't know contacts you unexpectedly;
- ▶ you suspect you're not dealing with a real company – for example, if there's no postal address;
- ▶ you've been asked to transfer money quickly;
- ▶ you've been asked to pay in an unusual way – for example, by vouchers;
- ▶ you've been asked to give away personal information like passwords or PINs.

Scammers are constantly updating their methods to keep their scams topical. For example during the lockdown period we began to see a number of parcel related scams. Telephone scams, postal scams and text message scams continue to be a big problem. As the world of technology has evolved we have seen an increase in online scams such as bogus websites and scam emails.

There are things you can do to protect yourself from being scammed online:

- ▶ If you're buying something on a website you haven't used before then spend a few minutes checking it out. What do others say about the company? It's worth looking for reviews on different websites – don't rely on reviews the company has put on its own website. Are there contact details and not just an email address? Do all the links on the website work? Are all the pages there?
- ▶ You can search for a company's details on GOV.UK. This will tell you if they're a registered company or not.
- ▶ Check there's a closed padlock icon in the browser's address bar. The closed padlock means that the connection is secure.

If the closed padlock is not there, or the browser says not secure, then don't use the site

- ▶ Don't click on links, open attachments, or download anything received in an email unless you were expecting it. Doing this could infect your computer with a virus.
- ▶ Make sure your antivirus software is up to date to give you more protection.

For useful advice on reporting scams please visit the Norfolk County Council website: **www.norfolk.gov.uk/business/trading-standards/scams**

Please also consider signing up to our free consumer alerts at: **www.norfolk.gov.uk/business/trading-standards/scams/consumer-alerts**

Finally, please consider following Norfolk Trading Standards on Facebook at **www.facebook.com/NorfolkTradingStandards**

or on Twitter at **twitter.com/NorfolkCCTS** for more scam updates.

Stewart Adams, Trading Standards

COMMITTEE VACANCIES

Following the sad death of David Beard we now have three vacancies to fill on the Committee, at least two of which have to be women. It is fair to say that our committee is somewhat depleted at the moment and we are in need of new members to help with some of the tasks we have to perform. In particular we are anxious to recruit someone who will take responsibility for organising the winter talks, which we hope to re-establish this year and we are also keen that someone will represent us on the Sports and Social Committee. Our relationship with the club is crucial in that we rely on them to make the premises available for meetings and to provide us with other assistance throughout the year.

If you are interested, please feel free to nominate yourself and we will be pleased to hear from you. E mail porterjames172@gmail.com to express an interest. We look forward to hearing from you.

THE GREAT EAST COAST FLOOD

It was on 31 January 1953, 70 years ago, that a sea surge led to flooding down the East coast from King's Lynn to Canvey Island. As the years go by, memories of that day and the aftermath will fade. I was fortunate to listen and record an interview with a seaman who lived through the flood in his home town of Wells-next-Sea. Originally recorded by Wells Local History Group in 2002 it forms part of an archive of oral history recordings. A transcript of the interview is stored for posterity in the archives at Norfolk Records Office.



*Wells-next-the-Sea, repairing sea wall, 1953.
Source: picture.norfolk.gov.uk*

David Cox was born in Wells-next-Sea, Norfolk in 1926 into a fishing family. His father and uncles were fishermen, so it was perhaps inevitable that he would follow in these family footsteps. Steps that would take him on transatlantic cargo trips to America, fishing for whelks out of Wells harbour and volunteer crew on the lifeboats.

With his many years at sea, David had developed a keen eye for when bad weather was looming. It was 1953 and the East coast was about to suffer its worst flooding in living memory. David records on tape that as he hauled in his fishing pots, there were "hard westerlies" blowing and he had a feeling that the sea felt "irregular". There was a westerly gale, and the wind was increasing. He went to watch Wells play football with this father and observed the "ball was held by the wind" and that the tide was nearly up to "Marsh Heads". He went to East Quay to check on his boats and then to the pub but didn't stay, as he was on lifeboat 'stand-by' duty. Did David have some sixth sense of foreboding?

David's description of that night is both graphic and chilling. The tide began flooding Wells quayside and "by 7pm the sea was breaking on

houses on the quay". Then "the surge" started. There was water in the railway station and at midnight the tide did not go out. By morning, there were three breaches in the West Bank at Wells; boats had been lifted by the tide and lay on the fields. The bank had been breached at Burnham Overy and water had surged along to Wells. There was "wreckage everywhere".

The surge travelled down the East coast as far as Canvey Island. It took a couple of weeks to see the full extent of the damage. Wells beach huts "fell like a pack of cards" and blocked the doors to the lifeboat station.

David remembered that after the flood, a small boat was launched from a local hotel and sailed down the road to rescue stranded people. "An old boy and his wife were rescued with a door used as a make-shift stretcher" to get them onto the boat. The sea was "vicious". Dead ducks lay in hedgerows, "a terrible sight". The freshwater marshes were flooded by sea water at every tide for a week after the surge until the breaches could be sealed. About thirty lorries were used and men worked "round-the-clock" to plug the largest breach with chalk taken from the local lime works. Fishermen filled sandbags and with the help of helicopters, the breach at Wells harbour was filled. The clean-up and re-building could begin.



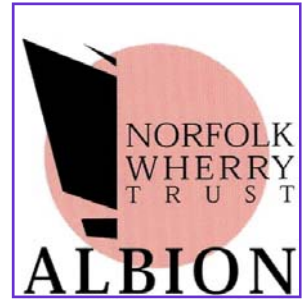
Archive photo of the wreckage following the storm surge in Wells.

Seven years after the flood, David became coxswain of the Wells lifeboat when his Uncle Billy retired. David recalled many rescues during his time as coxswain; his most difficult rescue was in February 1979 for which he was awarded a silver medal. David retired as coxswain at sixty years old having passed on his knowledge and seamanship to the crew members who had volunteered under him.

Jackie Mitchell

THE NORFOLK WHERRY TRUST

In 1949 a small group of far-sighted local enthusiasts set up the Norfolk Wherry Trust to preserve and keep sailing actively on Broadland waters one or more examples of the trading wherry. **Albion** was one of a few which survived and seemed to offer the best option for preservation. She was surveyed, repaired and a new sail fitted. Her maiden voyage for the Trust took place on 13 October 1949. The Mayors of Great Yarmouth and Norwich were on board during the day and re-enacted an ancient ceremony at Hardley Cross. The crew were the Cates brothers.



For several years **Albion** carried out trading but cargoes became difficult to come by and were uneconomic. It was then suggested that she should carry passengers: Her hold was fitted out with accommodation for twelve people and she provides a unique sailing and holiday experience. In the years she has been sailed by the Trust she has been through many ups and downs. In the 1960s it seemed as if she might be in too bad a condition to continue. A public appeal, whose patron was Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh, raised the necessary funds to ensure that she was repaired and put into good order. **Albion** is now regularly maintained by volunteers, but it is a continual process with a wooden boat 125 years old this year. In the 1980s a dyke was purchased and a wet shed erected for cover during the winter. Subsequently a new shed was added to provide a workshop and store, with sufficient room for meetings, refreshments and a toilet.



The wherry **Albion** was built by William Brighton on the banks of Lake Lothing, near Lowestoft, in 1898. The Bungay Maltsters, WD and AE Walker, commissioned her at a cost of £455. As well as being the oldest trading wherry afloat she is also unique, being the only carvel trading wherry built; all the others were of clinker design. It is said this was to avoid being caught on the side of locks but this is the subject of much debate.

Jimmy Lacey was **Albion's** first skipper, with his young nephew Jack Powley as mate. In 1900 Jack became skipper, a job he held for some 20 years. In the early 1930s she was sold to the General Steam Navigation Company and named the Plane. George Farrow became her skipper and she traded on the Norwich river until the Second World War. During the war she was stripped of her gear and used as a lighter at the Colman factory in Norwich. It was here that she lay when the Trust took her over.

The Trust relies on donations and membership fees of £25 per year and is run entirely by volunteers with weekly maintenance sessions on Thursday mornings, and also Saturdays during the winter, at the Wherry Base on Horsefen Road, Womack, Ludham. New volunteers are always welcome whether experienced in manual jobs or back-office clerical work.

During the summer months **Albion** is available for hire, either for charter parties of up to 12 people or individual people for day cruises. See <https://wherryalbion.com/> and click on "Sailing Experiences" or e-mail "bookings@wherryalbion.com"

The Trust looks forward to challenges ahead as it continues to maintain and sail a venerable vessel that is loved throughout Broadland and beyond. The Trust wants develop greater participation for Trust members in all aspects of the Trust's work and to encourage young people to take a major part in their activities. The Trust wants to increase the loan collection to local museums, publish more historical information and share the history of the Norfolk Trading Wherry with individuals and groups, young and old. The on-line archives can be viewed at <https://archives.wherryalbion.com/>



To support the Trust by becoming a member go to the website or e-mail membership@wherryalbion.com

DAVID BEARD

As we reported briefly in our last edition, David Beard died on 19 March aged 72.

David was described by Jonathan Dunning, the Branch Secretary, as a stalwart of the Branch, and never was such a description so richly deserved. He was Senior Steward in Trading Standards for many years and represented his members diligently and with some vigour. It would be fair to say that of David you always knew when he was around. He had things to say and very often they came accompanied by his famous sense of humour. He had a joyful ability to make people laugh, even in difficult times and this often helped him to get his point across to those who were listening. He also represented the Branch (NALGO and latterly UNISON) at the Regional level and sometimes at National meetings, although he never, as far as I recall, attended a National Delegate Conference.

When he retired he almost immediately became a member of the Retired Members Committee and served on it until he died. He was an active member of the committee, writing articles for *Backnumber* and also attending courses for those about to retire. He worked with other members of the committee to come up with a presentation that would encourage people to join the section. He also went to National Retired Members Conference on a couple of occasions, most recently in Telford last year.

Some of you may have seen the tribute to David in the Journal for Trading Standards Officers which praised his efforts in working with their Regional organisation and his commitment to his work. They also praised his sense of humour making the point that it was not always "politically correct"! True as that is he was always kindly disposed to everyone and, in turn, everyone was kindly disposed to him.

David was also an incredibly social person. He would lighten up any gathering whether in the Sports and Social Club, a pub almost anywhere, a party or in a restaurant. He and his wife Vicky were renowned for keeping a "good table" and enjoyed sharing their hospitality as well as enjoying that of others. I had the honour of being one of those speaking at his funeral and I said then and am happy to repeat that David will be sadly missed but very fondly remembered.
James Porter

Activities

On **Mondays** from 9.30 am at NCC Sports & Social Club at County Hall we continue to offer **table tennis** and a mid-morning natter over a cuppa. Other activities [short mat bowls, snooker, pool, and darts] are available if there is sufficient interest.

Every month on the **third Thursday** of each month at 2pm there is a friendly afternoon of **whist**, also at the Sports & Social club.

We have a vacancy on the Committee for someone to represent us on the Sports and Social Committee. If you are interested, please contact the editor.

These activities are free of charge to our members and their guests. We should love to welcome more people to these activities so why not give it a try and join in?

WINTER TALKS

We are intending to reintroduce the Winter Talks beginning in October. This, at the moment, is an aspiration as we have no one dedicated to their organisation. However, we are following up a number of possible speakers and full details will appear in the next edition, assuming that we have been able to make necessary arrangements.

So, for the moment, pencil into your diaries Wednesday 25 October 2023 and we will hope to have a full programme available by the time of publication of the next edition. James Porter

WHERE TO FIND US

If you wish to make any comments or raise issues about **Backnumber**, please e-mail the Editor

Jim Porter at porterjames172@gmail.com

The Branch Office will not be reopening, but post and telephones are being monitored.

The retired members e-mail address at County Hall is

Retiredmembers.norfolkcounty@btconnect.com