



THE BRUNDALL & BRAYDESTON CHRONICLE

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Have you got something to share? Items for publication should be sent to The Editor, Orchard House, Blakes Lane, Brundall NR13 5JN. Tel: 01603 716115 Email: enquiries@brundallvillagehistory.org.uk

The story of an old village friend

Brundall's ancient Robinia tree, which has stood in The Street since around 1750, sadly faced the chainsaw this summer, after a large branch fell from it, making it potentially dangerous to passers-by.

Former Brundall tree warden John Fleetwood remembers his old friend in our back page article.



120 years of The Yare

This year, in lockdown, the landlords of the Yare Hotel on Brundall Riverside celebrated an amazing forty years at the pub, making them among Norfolk's longest-serving landlords in a single pub.

We hope to hear from them about their time at the Yare in the next edition of *The Chronicle*, along with stories about some other more recent landlords, but here we take a look at the ups and downs of some of the others who have kept The Yare over its history of more than 120 years.

Much of the information has been gleaned from Local Recall, which is Archant's new service enabling the public to get online access to articles

THE YARE HOTEL.
YACHTING, BOATING, and ANGLING
STATION.
(Immediately adjoining Railway-station, Brundall,
Norwich)

H. FLOWERS & CO.,
PROPRIETORS.

IT having been necessary to Enlarge the above Hotel the Proprietors beg to call the attention of the Public in general, also Yachting and Boating-men in particular, where craft of every kind can be obtained upon reasonable terms.

from the EDP archive. See page 4 for more about the service.

As we know, newspapers tend to report courts and crime, and so the incidents recorded here give a view which is perhaps a little on the dark side. But it is clear from other articles that The Yare has been a centre for regattas, ice-skating parties, celebratory dinners, boat trips and

more during the decades. The first recorded landlords were Henry Flowers, followed by his son-in-law, James Fawcett. Henry Flowers was at the pub from at least 1883, when this advert shows that the hotel was enlarged. He was Lord Mayor of Norwich in 1904-5, and died in 1909 aged 77. Unfortunately, a 1500-word obituary in the EDP of 1909 makes no mention of his Brundall life.

James Fawcett was born in Lakenham and in 1871 was working as a 'skiff warehouseman' in Bradford.

He married Alice Flowers in 1882 and in 1891 is recorded as a boat builder and hotel keeper at The Yare.

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www.brundallvillagehistory.org.uk

Skating, regattas and riverside fun

Extracts from the EDP

January 26 1885

SKATING.—The lovers of this healthful recreation will be glad to learn that the ice upon Surlingham Broad is perfectly safe and in splendid condition, and will no doubt be largely patronised, as the Great Eastern Railway have agreed to issue tickets to bona fide skaters at single fares for the return journey to Brundall, and Messrs. Flowers of the Yare Hotel will convey persons to and from the ice.

July 9 1888

The employees at Messrs. Thompson & Sons, Rampant Horse Street, on Saturday had their annual outing. The Otter steam-launch was hired for the day. At the Yare Hotel, Brundall, a very good breakfast was provided, to which the party did ample justice.

March 13 1895

For the third time the entire staffs of the Brundall, Buckenham, and Lingwood railway employees were entertained at the Yare Hotel, Brundall. Mr. H. Flowers presided. Host Fawcett placed an excellent repast upon the tables, and a hearty vote of thanks was accorded him.

June 11 1898

The first regatta arranged by Mr. George Smith of the Yare Hotel, Brundall, passed off very successfully on Thursday afternoon in moderate weather, rain making things rather unpleasant during the latter part of the afternoon. There were a good number of people present. Although the wind was a bit flukey, there was some excellent sailing in all matches.

The story of the Yare Hotel: Part 1



1901: Pub hits the headlines

The Yare was in the news in the EDP of April 11 1901, when Albert William Linford, described as a licensed victualler of the Yare Hotel, Brundall, was charged with receiving timber from a wherryman, knowing it to have been stolen.

Mr Linford told the court that he had made no secret of his purchase, often bought from wherryman, and thought he had the right to do so.

He had been chapel-keeper at St a baptist chapel, and had then become a licensed victualler.

The chairman of the bench said: "The prisoner was a publican, and he must have known something of the habits of wharfingers and watermen.

"Could he have believed that it was any part of the business of a waterman to offer him for sale good sound boards?"

The jury found Linford guilty but recommended mercy on account of his previous good character.

The chairman responded that: "If it were not for the kind and considerate way in which the jury had looked at it, he should have passed a much more severe sentence."

Linford still received 15 months' hard labour!

Time in prison obviously left the pub in need of a landlord, and that one was found is indicated by this advert from just a week later:

"Wanted, a good general servant. Apply, Hastings, Yare Hotel, Brundall."

This was James Hastings, who stayed at The Yare until December 1907, when "A. J. Merrison, proprietor", advertised "A Large Number of Rowing and Fishing Boats. Steward Patteson's Ales and Stout, Wines and Spirits."

Edward Henry Reeve (1884-1922) became landlord shortly after the departure of Mrs Merrison.

At the age of 17 he is recorded as being an organ builder, and by 1911 he was a jobmaster – a term which means he was probably in charge of livery stables – in Blofield. He and his wife, Hilda, moved to the Yare in April 1915, in the midst of the first world war – perhaps his horses had gone for war service? Edward was 31 and the couple had a son, Cecil, born in 1907. Could this be the young chap pictured on his bike outside the pub circa 1916?

But the Government needed soldiers and in May 1916 conscription, already applied to most single men between 18 and 41, was extended to married men. In October 1916 Edward Reeve enlisted at Wroxham, with Hilda taking over The Yare's licence the following month.

His medical reports are on record: he is 5ft 4ins, weighing 10st, and described (perhaps unfairly) as "obese". On his discharge in March 1918 as a private in the Norfolk Regiment, it is recorded that his



The Reeve family (and servants?) circa 1916. Photo courtesy of the fascinating Norfolk Public Houses website: norfolkpubs.co.uk.

complexion was fresh, his eyes blue and his hair brown. His trade was as publican of the Yare Hotel, and he took back the licence from Hilda in 1919.

His tenure did not last long – On November 30 1922 the following notice appeared in the EDP:

REEVE—November 25. at the Yare Hotel, Brundall, Edward Henry Reeve, aged 38, the dearly beloved husband of Hilda A. Reeve, and only son of Mr. and Mrs. J. Reeve of Blofield, from bronchial pneumonia.

The unfortunate Arthur John Merrison appears in court just six months later, as the victim of a gang of brothers from Blofield who attacked him at The Yare when he tried to stop a fight. They returned later to cause more trouble, leaving Arthur Merrison battered and bruised.

The chairman of the bench said it was "a most savage assault, and they intended to put down this rowdiness in this part of East Norfolk." The defendants were fined, and sentenced to hard labour.

Arthur Merrison's time at The Yare ended abruptly in July 1913, when the EDP reported: "Mr. A. J. Merrison, proprietor of the Yare Hotel, Brundall, has died in Norwich Hospital, where he had been taken in consequence of an accident while opening a ginger beer bottle,

whereby he was severely cut."

His wife, Ellen Octavia Merrison, attempted to continue the business, but found herself in trouble in December 1914, when she was fined £5, and £1. 4s. costs, for permitting drunkenness. The drunken man in question was a soldier, who was recuperating from his injuries at the war hospital at Brundall House, and had evidently had enough of the nurses' attentions.

Mrs Merrison told the court that when she asked the soldier what he was doing at The Yare, he replied, "It's all right missus; I am not under petticoat government tonight at the hospital."

According to the evidence, the wounded soldier had left the hospital without permission. The quartermaster realised he was out

and, clearly knowing his habits, went to the Yare to find him. "He was brought out, assisted over the rails, and taken to the hospital... there was the utmost difficulty in getting him to bed."

Locals from the pub testified that the soldier was sober – but the court did not believe them.

It was not long before Mrs Merrison gave up the pub, as an advert from the EDP in March 1915 reveals, saying that she was giving up business at The Yare Hotel and auctioning the contents, which included "Mahogany Dining, Writing, and other Tables, Antique Mahogany Bureau". From the eight bedrooms came "Nearly New Oak, Walnut, and Satinwood Suites, Strong Brass and Iron Single and Double Bedsteads", while outdoors were a fowl house and piggeries.

EDP Local Recall: a new service

I have signed up to Archant's Local Recall service (www.localrecall.co.uk) which allows me to access articles from some past years of the Eastern Daily Press.

The service doesn't match up to sites like The Times Digital Archive or British Newspapers Online—yet— but I found it a great resource.

The 'translations' of the articles at the side of the image of the newspaper page are—very often—full of gibberish, having been done by computer character recognition.

A team of volunteers is currently working its way through these, making corrections, but it will be a long job. (The photo of the actual article is also shown so it is still useful.)

There are annual options, but my £5.99 a month allows me to cancel at any time.

Celia Sutton

Your stories of lockdown life

Have you got a tale to tell or a photo to share which records Brundall's experience of lockdown? In years to come people will be fascinated to find out how village folk coped with Covid 19. Send stories and images to Celia Sutton at Orchard House, Blake's Lane, Brundall NR13 5JN or email to celiasutton53@gmail.com.

John Fleetwood, Brundall's former tree warden, author of *Trees of Brundall and Braydeston* and now the Broadland tree warden network co-ordinator, pens a tribute for an old friend. He is pictured below giving a talk at the Robinia some years ago.

Friday 24 July 2020 saw the passing of a much loved old friend of mine, one that will be sadly missed.

Many of my fellow Brundall residents shared my grief but, as in so many cases, perhaps the release from the slow decay of old age was a blessing and we can remember our old friend in the proud, vigorous glory we had become accustomed to and, indeed, had grown to love so much.

My dear old friend was a tree, but not just any old tree. It was a landmark. The building the Robinia adorned dates from the 17th century and has retained its thatched roof and old world character. It was, back in the early 1700s, the village pub.

Many people passed the tree nearly every day but many failed to notice one of the oldest trees in the village sitting on the right hand side of the building.

That wonderful *Robinia pseudoacacia* (also known as false acacia or locust tree) was 270 years old. The Robinia is native of North America, and was introduced into Britain in 1636. The wood is particularly strong, resistant to rot and very heavy and was originally imported for ship-building.

So, a traditional pub in 1750, log fire, tankards of local brew and, at most, 20 customers, the greater majority of whom probably never travelled more than ten miles from



Brundall or Braydeston in their whole lives ... and someone plants this North American tree outside! Why? It's inexplicable!!

On the morning of Friday 24 July 2020 when the Robinia's reign was ended, my phone hardly stopped ringing with people wishing to know why it was being removed. T

That's why this silly old man will be attempting to have some kind of memorial erected to the remaining stump of the tree. Maybe "a wonderful ancient Robinia once stood here".

John tells us that although the tree has begun to sprout from the sides, it will never grow into a tree as it was before, but it will become more bushy.

Stories written, compiled and edited by Celia Sutton. Thanks to Glyn Thomas for genealogy research and to Norfolkpubs.co.uk for the p3 photo.

Editor's note: Although auto-despatch of this edition by email was possible, we decided once again to send the *Chronicle* direct to your home in its traditional format. We thank Interprint for their reprographic services.

Please note: Only one person, wearing protective equipment, has been involved in the despatch of this Chronicle.