



# 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](mailto:enquiries@brundallvillagehistory.org.uk)

## A story of Brundall in decades gone by

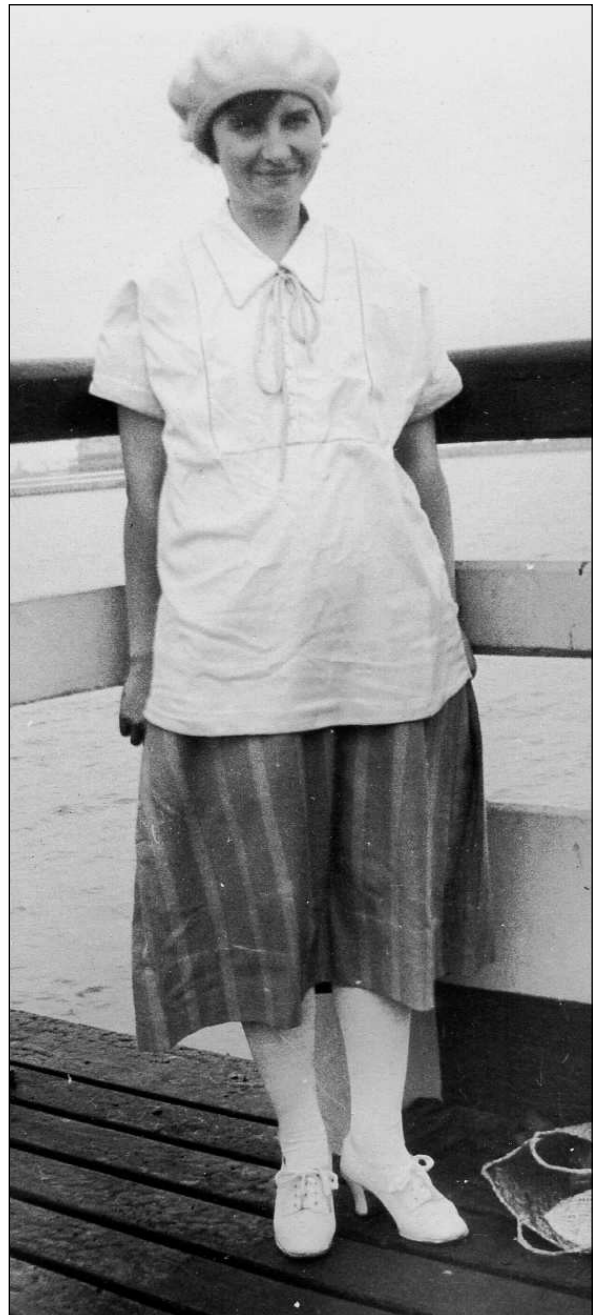
In 1973, Gladys Swallow (pictured right), who lived in Holmesdale Road, Brundall, took the trouble to write down her memories of the village in the 1920s and 1930s. It's a lovely personal account, and her family has added some extra information and more about Gladys herself, who died in 1989.

'One can hardly imagine Brundall as it was in 1926', wrote Gladys.

It was a peaceful country village with a farm opposite us and fields dotted here and there up our end. Mr Read's nurseries stretched half-way up Cucumber Lane. A few houses straggled one side of the road, and three on the other. Holmesdale Road was not made up and little lakes were constantly forming in it, though this did not really matter, as there were only six bungalows.

Postwick Lane was a narrow road bounded by the Gardens...the famous water fowl were well known as they

*(Continued on page 2)*



Gladys Swallow c.1920s

Picture courtesy of Carol Thompson

[www.brundallvillagehistory.org.uk](http://www.brundallvillagehistory.org.uk)

# ‘Everyone hummed or sang a tune’

(Continued from page 1)

occasionally wandered out onto the cross roads, only to be shooed back to their lake by sympathetic villagers.

The other end of Postwick Lane gave two exits to the railway station which was the other main source of travel – sometimes twenty to thirty passengers arrived or departed daily.

Access to the river was easy from Laurel Drive and West End Avenue, the former having a rough road surface and scanty bungalows, and the latter being built up. Over the railway bridge and down the cinder track to the slowly-flowing river. Here it was possible to sit and read, knit or dream with no-one to object. It was also a nice place to take the dog for a run.

Scouts and Guides were strong in the village, also a football team which was patronised by the rector, Mr Chamberlin. He also camped out with the Scouts in the summer in one of his fields.

Classes for Sunday School children were held in the rector’s hall (now the village library). Whist drives and children’s treats were also held there. The White Horse Inn also held whist drives and concerts. Usually the place was crowded with inhabitants. The policeman from Blofield always came towards the end of the whist drives to make sure that they had been conducted fairly. The chief constable was very particular about this. Some of the best refreshments were always kept for the ‘arm of the law’, when he arrived. A working man’s club flourished down the other end of the village.

Later the Memorial Hall was built [1948] and dedicated to the men who died in the war.

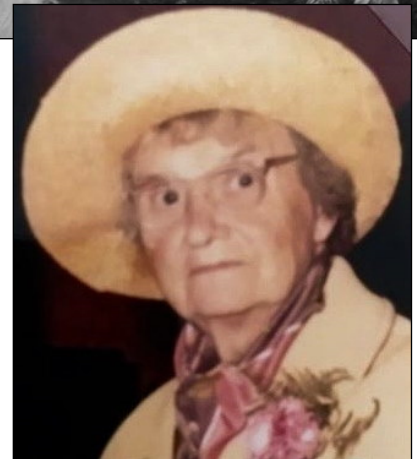
The great difference about Brundall from 1926 to the present day is in the people. In 1926 they were carefree and happy. Whatever they felt or put up with was covered by a happy smile and singing. Everyone sang or hummed a tune; errand boys whistled and the baker sang. (The other day I noticed that the paper boy was whistling. I was so pleased I gave him a tip, and said I was pleased and would he keep on doing it. He has not whistled since! Progress?) Jokes were frequent and shared by all. What a change from today when natural



**Above:**  
**Gladys**  
**pictured aged**  
**about four in**  
**1903-4.**

**Right:** Gladys  
**in 1974.**

**Far right:** The  
**Swallows In**  
**the garden of**  
**their Norwich**  
**home, 1911.**



music has been replaced by the transistor, often carried by children and youths, and blaring away on building sites.

One person told me years ago that when during the day she was in Norwich she felt like a cog in a wheel. On her return to Brundall she felt like an individual.’

### ***Gladys continues the story from 1933:***

‘There were greenhouses in Cucumber Lane. From Holmesdale Road to the top of Cucumber Lane the only houses were Mr Read’s bungalow and two cottages. Brundall Gardens was privately-owned and extended, unbroken, from Laurel Drive to the Church. It contained nightingales, fancy ducks and millions of frogs which migrated regularly across Postwick Lane.

Holm Close, where Mrs Geary’s house stands, was burned down the day before it opened as a country club.



## Now it's over to you...

Have you enjoyed these reminiscences from Gladys Swallow, written in 1973?

It's a fascinating insight into our village's past which would have been lost if she had not taken the time to record her memories.

So... now it's over to you.

Can you contribute to the Brundall Local History Group Archive for the future? Unless we record these memories now, they will not be preserved.

Do you have memories of Brundall from years gone by— from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s? Or do you know someone who has lived in the village for many years who would be able to share their memories?

All this will be of interest in the future in the same way that Gladys Swallow's reminiscences have shed a light on the past for us.

You don't have to be a skilled author – just let us know if you, or someone you know, could contribute to our growing archive, and we will help.

The church organ was pumped by hand and the church was heated by one large coke stove by the door. There was a pond where the rectory stands.

Where the Mace Market stands was Miss [Elsie] Butcher's shop with standing room for three thin customers! Behind it was the old smithy. The Old Beams restaurant was a gardener's cottage to Riverscourt, which was one big house including Herons Hill and a lovely big garden. The barn next door was really a barn, used as a riding school at one time, later as an ironmonger's shop. Another barn stood end on to The Street, next to the White House, and 'Old Sam', the odd job man, lived there.

There were allotments [during World War Two] where St Lawrence Avenue was built and the fields

extended clear from the back of Field House to Highfield Avenue. [Field House is on the corner of Cucumber Lane and Fir Tree Close, and was the home of Albert Greenacre BEM, who had retired to Brundall after a career in the Metropolitan Police.]

The corner garage (Castons) was one small shed with a field behind it where a pony lived.

An ice cream tricycle plied down Cucumber Lane and the Street in the summer.

There was a post box on the last bus to Norwich. Brundall had one postman, named Ernie, who knew where everyone lived. If one moved house, he unfailingly delivered to the new house.

We used to swim in the river at Brooms yard and Surlingham Ferry.'

## Life as a teacher and an exciting journey

**We would like to thank Gladys's niece, Carol Thompson, who has kindly provided the photos and information about her aunt, including the following:**

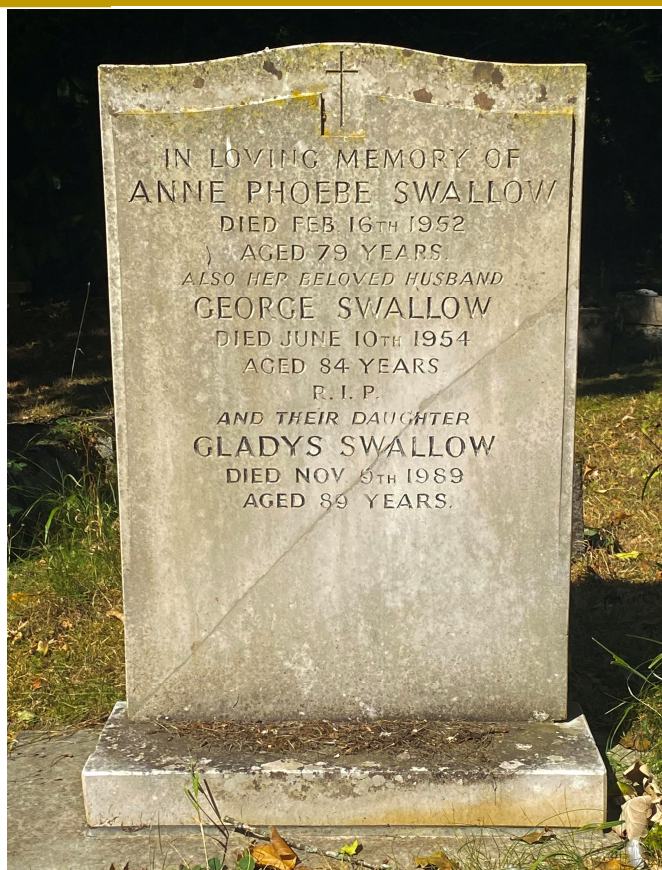
Gladys was born in Stratford, east London, on December 21, 1899, and died in her 89th year in the Springdale nursing home, Brundall.

The family had lived in Ely, Lowestoft and then Norwich until 1927 when her father, George, bought the recently-built bungalow in Holmesdale Road, Brundall. He named it after his birthplace in Hertfordshire, Bengoe, carving the name on his front gate.

The 1939 register has Gladys living in Holmesdale Road with her parents, George and Anne Phoebe Swallow and younger brother, George Harold (Carol's father).

They were a musical family. Gladys was taught the piano, her brother had singing lessons and he and his father belonged to Brundall Church choir and played the organ in Witton Church. They both gave recitals at The White Horse, Brundall, for the Great Eastern Railway Company.

Gladys trained as an elementary school teacher, working at three Norwich schools. Then being registered as a teacher, with a salary of £150 per year in 1932, she taught at Thorpe Hamlet Infants School and Angel Road School.



**Gladys is buried in Brundall cemetery with her parents. Photo: Carla Hodgson**

Gladys retired in 1960-61 and embarked on her trip of a lifetime, sailing to Fremantle, Western Australia where she stayed with two of her former teaching friends for six months. She took many photos in the form of slides and used to give showings of her travels to various meetings in Brundall.

## A new way to view the past

A new online-only, free monthly history magazine has been launched with a unique concept: it reports the news from 200 years ago as if it was happening now, and in the language of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**200 Magazine** makes use of contemporary newspapers, magazines, diaries and images from the 1820s.

The front section of the magazine contains news coverage from then, and the back pages link those

events and news stories to now, highlighting related visitor attractions, websites, books, magazines, organisations, and TV/film/radio output.

News stories in the first two editions have included the (shocking for some) marriage of Thomas William Coke MP ('Coke of Norfolk') to a woman 50 years his junior, the impact of the agricultural recession on Norfolk, executions, an election riot in King's Lynn, and employers in Norwich dropping planned pay cuts for weavers.

**Visit: [www.200livinghistory.info](http://www.200livinghistory.info)**

**BLHG ARCHIVE PROJECT:** *We continue to work on the local research and cataloguing of our Archive Collection with the support of Norfolk Record Office. Our enthusiastic volunteers attend weekly practical sessions and some work from home.*

*If you are interested in joining our group please contact: Chloe Veale 01603 928804 or [enquiries@brundallvillagehistory.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@brundallvillagehistory.org.uk).*