

**HARKSTEAD - A BRIEF HISTORY**



## HARKSTEAD - A BRIEF HISTORY

### Early History.

People have been living in Harkstead for many thousands of years. Evidence of Stone Age occupation is known from the flint axes found, one near the stream which forms the boundary between Harkstead and Erwarnton and the other near Palace Quay. About 5000 years ago, in the Bronze Age, the peninsula was heavily populated and there is evidence of occupation of land bordering both the rivers. Round barrows with ring ditches were clearly visible at one time but continuous ploughing has flattened them. They are now only visible from aerial photographs of crop markings. In turn the Bronze Age was superseded by Iron. By the end of the last Millennium BC, the people of this last late Iron Age were using coins and pottery, which are still being discovered in the peninsula plough soil.

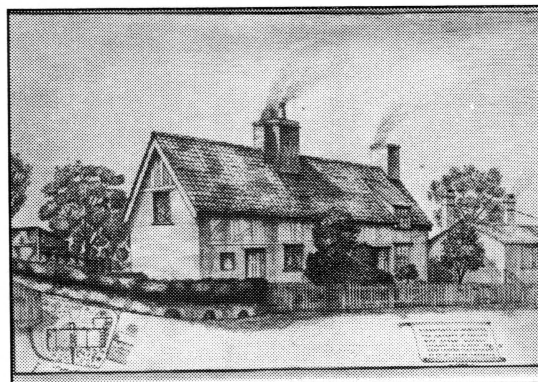
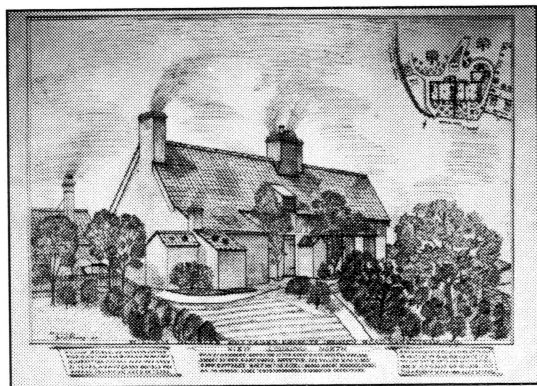
Following the Roman Conquest many of the local people copied the fashions and lifestyle of their Roman rulers. These people were labelled Romano-British and they occupied numerous farms throughout the peninsula. Following the departure of the Romans in what is known as the Dark Ages there were several waves of invaders, who came first to plunder and then to settle in East Anglia. The Angles and the Saxons came first across the North Sea and it is from them that the village got its present name, although it has been spelt differently down the centuries, originally Herca's Place and then Herchestedd, Herchestede, Harkstede and Harkstead.

In the later years of the last Millennium, Viking and Danish raiders came, eventually settling and co-existing with the Angles and the Saxons. Although not many settled on the peninsula it is known that two

settled in the Harkstead area. Little is known of them except their names, Brand and Grim, but the names they gave to the local woods and fields lasted for hundreds of years. Just before the Norman Conquest three manors were held in Harkstead, one by King Harold as a hamlet of Brightlingsea in Essex. The others were held by Edeva (Edith) the Fair and by Aelfric (Aluric) who was a freeman. These manors had in various amounts villagers, smallholders, slaves, horses, oxen and other cattle, ploughs and acres of woodlands and meadows. All of this is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 when the Norman conquerors took stock of all that they now ruled.

Information from this period is very sketchy but we do know from the subsidy return for the Villatta de Herkstede of 1327 that thirteen people paid their tax. This was 20% of their "moveables"; in the country this was cattle and crops while in the towns it would be money and stock-in-trade. Among those paying in Harkstead was a Roberto Page, who paid 10 pence and de Hughone de Nawelton who paid the most at 111 pence. In 1381 during the Peasants' Revolt which was led in the region by Thomas Ampson there is record of an incident in Harkstead.

As well as having a parish church there was also in Harkstead a chapel dedicated to St. Clement. This was situated in the southeast corner of the field called Chapel Down. The legacy was given to the chapel in 1528 and a further house adjoining the property was bequeathed in 1685. The site of the chapel is now ploughed up. In 1780 the Berners family, who also owned large areas of land in Woolverstone, purchased much of the land around Harkstead and became principal landowners until 1930 when part of the estate was sold off, the remainder being sold in 1957.



*Back view (left) and front view (right) of three old cottages in Harkstead in 1877. They belonged to Mrs Sarah Double and were sold and pulled down in 1883 and the cottages, of which The Old Post Office is one, were built on the site. Next to the cottages is the Old Forge.*



## *Harkstead - A Brief History - continued*

### **Recent History**

In the 1891 census returns Harkstead appears to have been a very thriving place; there were 371 inhabitants including 122 children aged under 12. As well as the Rector and the Baptist Minister (who was also a grocer and Prudential agent), there was one gamekeeper, three gardeners, four farmers, one groom, three farm bailiffs, three grocers, eighty-one farm labourers, two housekeepers, two teachers, two innkeepers (who also worked at other occupations, one being a grocer and the other a carpenter/wheelwright/undertaker), two harnessmakers, three blacksmiths, three hay and straw binders, one bricklayer, three brickmakers, one domestic nurse, one domestic cook, eleven domestic servants, one shop assistant, two dairymaids, two crew members of the barge "Seagull", one postmaster, two carpenters, three carriers and two sailors.

The very first Parish Council Meeting was held on 4th December 1894 in the schoolroom at Harkstead School. Mr. Alfred Smith, the schoolmaster, was voted in as Chairman and also elected were Reverend H.A. Berners, Samuel Abbott, William H. Allen, Henry Farthing, Eldred Gladwell, David Parker and Charles Rush.

Between 1906 and 1919 there was an outbreak of Bubonic and Pneumonic Plague on the peninsula. No one in Harkstead contracted it, but two people in Erwarton died of the disease in 1918.

In 1920 land was purchased in The Street to build the first two Council houses in Harkstead. No more were built until the 1950s when further houses were built in River View Road. A year or so later bungalows were built for the elderly in the same road. These were nicely laid out with a wide green verge on one side of



*Threshing at Beaumont Hall - late 1880s*



*Mrs Abbott. George Page and Cyril Abbott 1954*

the road. More recently, to celebrate the Millennium, trees and daffodils have been planted.

Harkstead was first supplied with electricity in the 1930s and this was followed by mains water in the 1950s. Much later a main sewer was installed. A small main sewer had already been laid when the Council houses in River View Road were built in the 1950s.

There is no mains gas supply in the village or in Lower Holbrook.

### **Second World War**

During both World Wars, many young men and women left Harkstead and joined the Armed Forces; sadly many did not return but their names are still remembered with pride on the War Memorial in St. Mary's Churchyard.

Life in Harkstead as elsewhere changed considerably at the outset of the War in September 1939 with the introduction of blackout restrictions and food, clothing and petrol rationing.



*Junction of Ipswich Road and The Street (circa 1930s)*



*Harkstead Village Coronation Committee 1953*



*Best Kept village sign outside the Village Hall 1992. Note the old ball in the process of being demolished.*



*Fred Page with his horses, outside Beaumont Hall in the 1930s*



*Cricket on the Playing Field in 1990*



## Harkstead - A Brief History - continued

Following the withdrawal of Allied troops from Dunkirk in May-June 1940, Britain prepared itself for the anticipated enemy invasion. As part of these measures, a local Home Guard Unit of thirty men was formed and gun emplacements set up to defend against enemy landings. Two of these are still visible on the shore towards Erwarnton and another was at Beaumont Hall.

Enemy air activity over the peninsula increased during the summer of 1940 with the commencement of the Battle of Britain and German aircraft passing overhead was a daily occurrence. At night the almost continuous passage of enemy aircraft en route to London and the industrial Midlands ensured plenty of local activity from fighter aircraft, guns and searchlights.

German bombs fell indiscriminately throughout the area and the sight of crashed German and British aircraft was a common occurrence. A Dornier 17 was reported to have come down in the river at Holbrook Bay after being attacked by British fighters in October 1940.

Several bombs fell in Harkstead but the only serious damage occurred at Rosedale, a dwelling near Shore Lane, on 26th August 1942.

On a very sad note, in the same year two Harkstead boys, Lionel Abbott and Eric Page, both aged 12, were killed when an AA shell, which they had picked up on



*HARKSTEAD HOME GUARD 1939-1945*

*Fred Askew, Arthur Firman, Bill Peck, Cliff Burgess, Alf Suckling, Fred Page, Jack Rush, George Page, Ernie Gobbold, Charlie Peck, Hub Page. Middle Row: Mr Rogers, Mr Gallington, Mr Mann, Mr Mitchel, Bill Grimwood, George Page, Bob Cullum, Charlie Hammond. Front Row: Stan Peck, Jim Brinkley, George Godbold, George Thurlow, Vic Hill, Mr Burgess, Arthur Page, Frank Last*

the shore at Palace Quay and taken to the Old Council Houses, exploded. Lionel was killed instantly and Eric died of his injuries a few days later.

The summer of 1944 saw the arrival of the V1 flying bombs or "doodlebugs", which were launched from sites on the Continent and passed over or near Harkstead, several crashing in the vicinity. Later the trail of V2 rockets were regularly visible from the peninsula as they were launched from the Continent towards London, the primary target.

It came as a great relief to all when Peace was declared in 1945 and the village returned to its normal peacetime activities.

### Village Hall.

The original village hall was built by voluntary local labour in 1947 and was converted from a deep litter chicken hut. It served the village extremely well, but its condition deteriorated to such an extent that a new village hall was built in 1992. On 17th May 1992 a "Farewell to the Old Hall Party" was held in the old hall with most village residents attending. On 27th January



*The first Village Hall Committee*

*Back row - Charlie Morpheu, Mrs Reg Palmer, Mr Scott (Harry Scott's father). Front row - Lionel Kitchingman, Mrs Kitchingman, Mrs Hurst (from the Old Rose pub), Alan Pritchard*



*The Old Village Hall on Polling Day 1992 (A few weeks before it was pulled down)*

## *Harkstead - A Brief History - continued*

1993 the new hall was completed and on 31st January a large party for all villagers and invited guests was held - the first function for the new hall.

### **Playing Field**

The playing field was originally leased at a peppercorn rent from local landowner, Sir Peter Green. Trees were planted and children's play equipment installed. The money for this was raised by local fund raising events. Following the untimely death of Sir Peter Green, Harkstead has been able, with the aid of various grants, to purchase the field. Further tree planting and landscaping were carried out by volunteers from the village aided by the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Project team. Three new seats were installed for resting and watching the world go by. It is now officially called "The Millennium Green". The field has been used for many events over the years and at one time boasted a thriving junior football team and a flourishing cricket team. On August Bank Holiday Mondays it is also the venue for the village fete, proceeds from which go mainly to Village Hall funds.

### **Schools**

There are records of a school in Harkstead dating back to 1818. This was both a day school and a Sunday school with 39 in attendance. In 1833, 56 children attended the day school which was supported by Archdeacon Berners, and 51 attended the Sunday school. A National School was built



*An assembly of villagers in the Village hall (probably 1947)  
Mrs Polly is in the centre, with the fur stole on her shoulder.*



*Peter Young presenting a bouquet to Marion Godley - Rodney Freeman and Jack Godley left*



*The New Village Hall Planning Committee 1993  
(Rodney Freeman missing)*



*Millennium Green workers at the entrance to the Green,  
Summer 1999*



## *Harkstead - A Brief History continued*

around 1857 and there is a log book in existence which started after the Christmas Holidays in 1867 and goes through to March 1883. This logbook gives a very interesting insight into education in those days. In the winter and spring, the weather seemed to control the children's attendances. Reasons for non-attendance included "a great many children absent on account of the bad state of the roads" or

"it was too cold for the little ones". Many were also absent because they were working in the fields. In the summer the children had five weeks off for "Harvest Holiday" but many would be helping in the fields even before the holiday and also afterwards in the



*School Children (top class?) 1922-3. School Mistress - top row centre*



*Harkstead School - c1925*



*The Old School Summer 1998*

*(Note the Neighbourhood Watch sign, which had just been put up)*

autumn where often the excuse was "kept at home to mind the baby". The teacher obviously had a difficult task teaching 40 children in six different standards and 41 infants with possibly only the help of a monitor. A school inspector's report from June 1872 states, "Arithmetic is improving, though not yet good. Spelling is very weak. Teaching is pretty fair only". This unsatisfactory report resulted in the deduction of one tenth of the grant for that year. The school house was built in 1890 and the school enlarged in 1891. Average attendance then was 66. By 1912 it was called the Public Elementary School and attendance had grown to 85.

This level of attendance remained fairly constant, (a photograph from 1948 shows over 60 children), but started to dwindle after the Second World War. Miss Dulcie Hopes was appointed as Headmistress in 1959 and retired in the mid-sixties. She was well liked and respected by all. By 1973 when the school finally closed there were only about 30 children left. After the closure most children in Harkstead attended the new school in Chelmondiston.

There was a school and schoolhouse in Lower Holbrook, now a private residence. The school was built in 1861 and was called Holton Green Rectory National School. In 1896 there were 20 children attending and the headmistress was Mrs. Waterman. Prior to its closure it was used in the 1920s as a chapel and also to provide cookery lessons for the girls from Holbrook school.



*Harkstead - A Brief History - continued*



*Harkstead Schoolchildren - Christmas 1963*

*Harkstead Primary School Children -  
April 10th 1973  
(Last day of Harkstead School)  
The following term the children were  
transferred to Chelmondiston*



*Mrs Hill's retirement presentation 1960*



## *Harkstead - A Brief History - continued*

### **St. Mary's Church**

Of 12th century origin, St. Mary's Church is some distance from the main part of the village. It has been in existence since the days of the Normans and traces of work dating from that particular period are still evident. Extensive renovations were undertaken in 1875. The Church now has six bells, which are rung almost every Sunday throughout the year and on other special occasions.

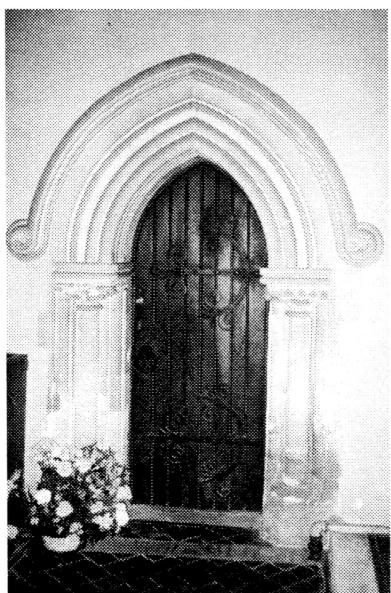
The first recorded Rector of the church was G de Spina from before 1287. Since then there have been a further thirty-two including the current Rector, the Rev David Newton. Rectors in the last two hundred years have been - H A Berners 1801, R Berners 1833, H Bree 1858, H A Berners 1865, H A Berners St E & I 1914, W M McWatters 1922, R W L Connor 1927, F E Westmacott 1947, J C Purves 1962, R D Newton 1974.



*The Pulpit, St Mary's Church  
(Alison Looser and Rebecca  
Ardern on the steps)*



*The Organ, St Mary's Church  
Jane Goyder - organist.  
Harvest Festival 1996*



*The Vestry Door August 1996*



*Arthur Page at the  
War Memorial  
Remembrance Day 1984*



*The dedication of the War  
Memorial in 1919*

## *Harkstead - A Brief History - continued*

### **Public Houses**

#### **The Rose Inn**

This was probably the first public house in Harkstead. It is recorded in the Census for 1841 and a Mrs. Mary Hart was the publican. The last publican before the inn closed in 1959 was Mr. Sangwell. It is now a private house but still bears the Rose name. It was a social meeting place for the village, especially for the men after their hard work on the land.

#### **The Baker's Arms**

The pub has provided drinks and refreshments over a long period and is the only public house in the village since the closure of The Rose. The first time The Baker's is mentioned appears to be the 1891 Census; previously it seems to have been a Grocer's Shop. Since then it has been a great part of the village, with its sunny garden being a nice spot to sit and refresh yourself with a cool drink in the summer. There is more about The Baker's under individual entries.



*Bakers Arms Steel Quoits Team 1937  
G Driver, W Potter, A Page, G Grimwood, B Quantrill (Umpire)  
Front - W Grimwood, D Quantrill*



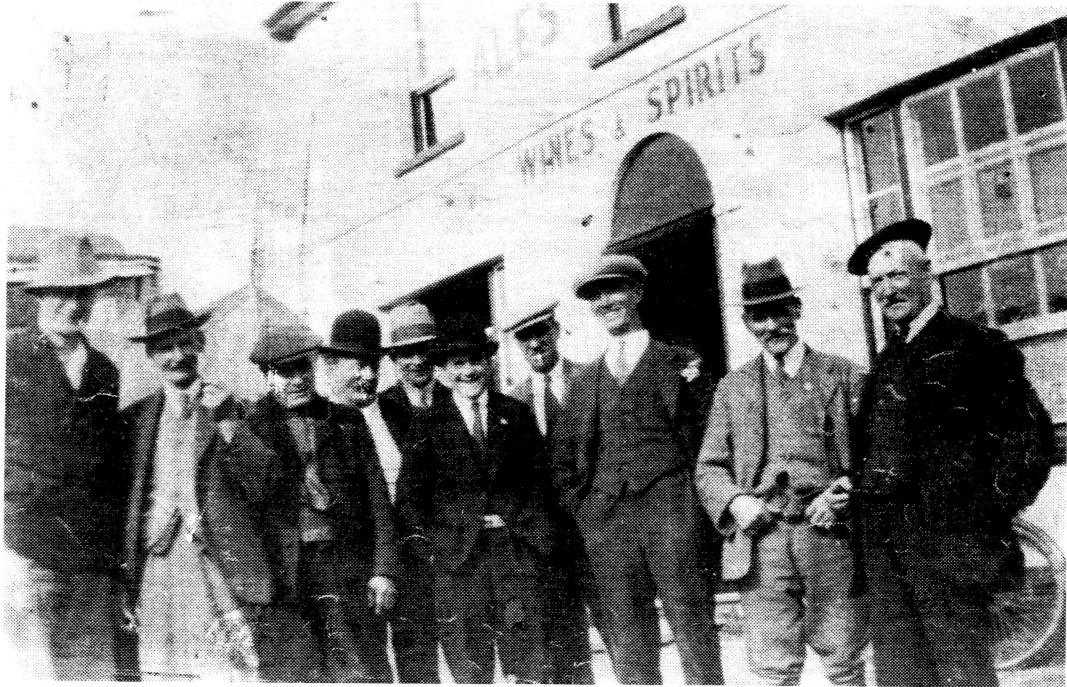
*Ray and Iris Brinkley  
outside The Bakers*



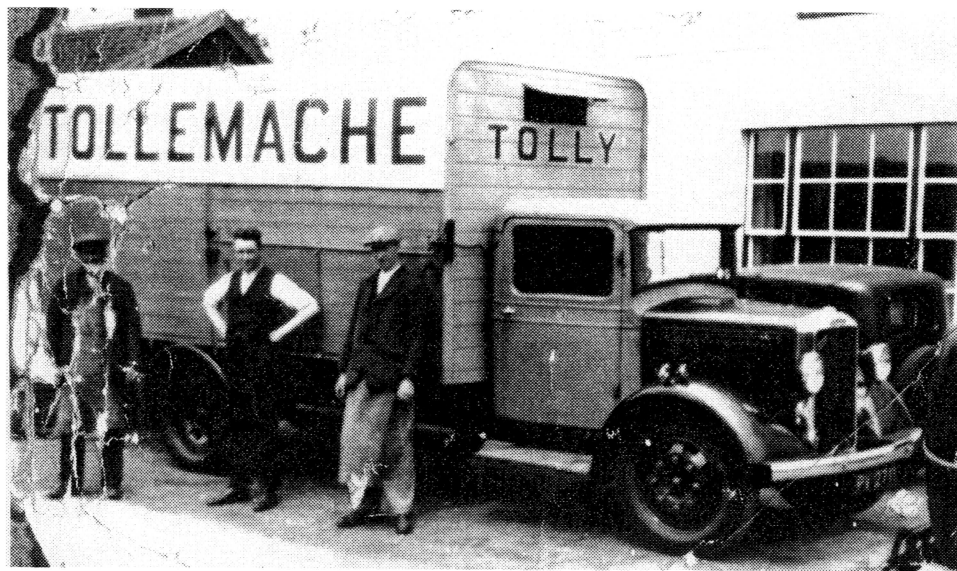
*Inside The Bakers 1950? From left: Iris Brinkley, Dora Kitchingman, Fred Dunnett, George Page, Vi Quantrill, Eric Quantrill, unknown (probably Jack Flatt).*



*Harkstead - A Brief History - continued*



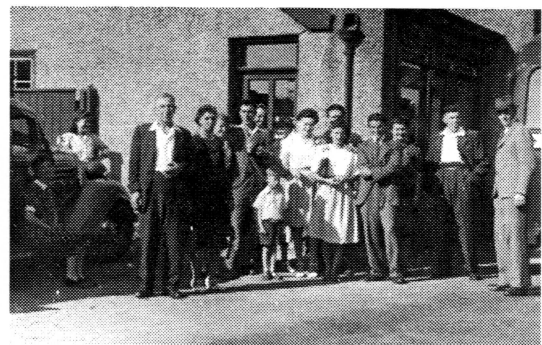
*Regulars outside The Rose Inn in the early part of the last century*



*Outside "The Rose Inn" Mr Jack Hurst (landlord) centre*



*Morris Dancers outside 'The Bakers' January 1994*



*An outing from 'The Bakers' in the late 40s*

## *Harkstead - A Brief History - continued*

### **Post Office**

There has been a postal service at Harkstead for over 125 years. The three terraced cottages in The Street near The Baker's Arms have all been post offices in the past. The cottage nearest the public house is called the Old Post Office and was run by Mr. & Mrs. Page for over 25 years. It was then moved to "The Anchorage" across the road, before being moved to its present location in "Arden" Ipswich Road. The present Postmistress Shirley Rufford has served the community for over 30 years.

### **Women's Institute/ Mothers' Union**

In the 1950s Harkstead had a thriving W.I. with many members enjoying a variety of functions, including the National Federation of Womens Institutes at the Albert Hall, the Queen's Royal Garden Party, local fetes and shows. Sadly as older members passed on or moved away and people became more mobile, through lack of support it ceased to function. To commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the organisation, Harkstead members of the W.I. planted a Canadian maple tree near the village hall.

The Mothers' Union, which was also a thriving group of local people in the 50s and 60s, has long been closed like the W.I., but believed to still exist in neighbouring villages.

### **Charities**

There were three charities in Harkstead but these were reduced to two with the amalgamation of the Hill's Charity with the Boothby Charity. The Hill's Charity was the bequest of Mr. Henry Hill and was for the benefit of the poor of the parish. As long as they belonged to or attended church they received a small sum, usually two shillings, sometimes more, according to their circumstances. If they were ill during the year they received milk, a jar of Virol (malt and cod liver oil) or Bovril and other things to help their recovery. The Boothby Charity was the bequest of Dame Susanna Boothby of London to the parishes of Harkstead and Erwarton. It was to be given to the poor of "my little estate in Suffolk" which consisted of two farms,

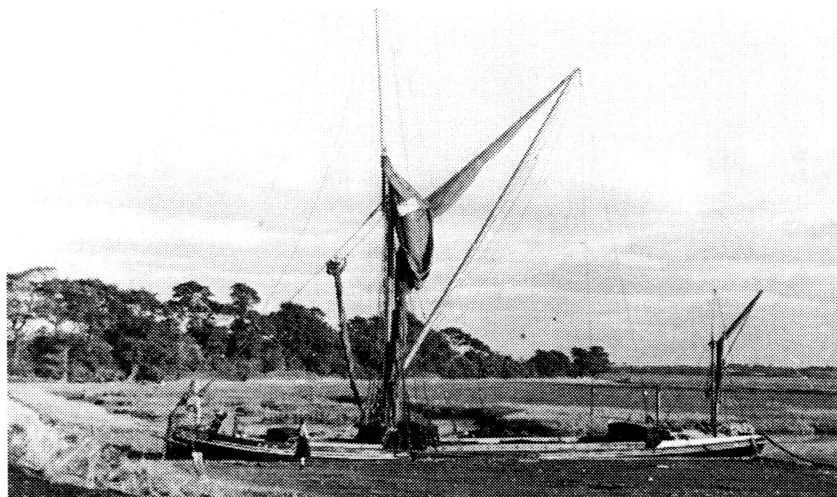


*A group of players from the Drama Group 1970s*

one in Harkstead and one in Erwarton. Over the years it has been changed and is now provided for the benefit of the children of Chelmondiston School, there being no school in Erwarton or Harkstead. The third charity "The John Henry Cartwright Trust" is the bequest of Mr. Cartwright who lived in Harkstead and died in December 1972. It is for the benefit of all the villagers of Harkstead aged 65 and over and is paid out annually at Christmas time.

### **Stackie Barges**

In the late 1800s Stackie Barges were a familiar sight around Harkstead. Tied up at Johnny-All-Along Quay they were filled with mangolds in the hold and also straw and hay on deck (hence the name "Stackie").



*Johnny All Alone Quay, taken by W A F Wrinch on October 1st 1940. Believed to be the last time (or nearly the last time) the Quay was used. The girl standing on the Quay is Nancy Wrinch, daughter of Sydney Wrinch.*



## *Harkstead - A Brief History - continued*

These were carried to London for the cowkeepers and also to Nine Elms for the Irish Railway horses. On the return journey they were filled with London muck (manure) to be spread on the fields. They were very dependent on the weather and in a good year only made 20 or so voyages. To make them easier to clean, a "bung" was fitted so they could be washed out, but despite this, the smell stayed with them all the time.

One local tenant farmer owned six barges and up to sixteen were chartered and loaded at Orwell and Stour Farm Quays. After the First World War the trade declined and the barges were sold off. One was converted to a yacht at Pin Mill and was taken over by the Admiralty at the start of the Second World War. Converted again to a motor barge it was used to de-magnetise ships against mines.



*Mr Wrinch's Stackie "Bluebell" leaving Erwarton Quay for London.  
The "Cygnet" at the Quay*

### **The Brickyards**

At Holbrook Creek there was a brickyard, which employed 28 men. The brickworks comprised a large building and a tall chimney alongside. The foreman's cottage was also inside the works.

There was a smaller brickworks at Harkstead, in Brick Kiln Lane. In 1841 it was managed by a Mr George C Scott. The Scott family were still making bricks there some 50 years later. Both works belonged to the Berners family of Woolverstone.



*Lower Holbrook Brickyard  
workers c1900*



*Lower Holbrook Brickyard  
workers*

## Harkstead - A Brief History - continued

### History Snippets

In 1696 a new tax on windows was introduced. To reduce their payment many people blocked up their windows. Evidence of this can still be seen in some of the houses in Harkstead.

In 1757 the artist Thomas Gainsborough painted a portrait of the then Rector of Harkstead, the Reverend Richard Canning, which now hangs in Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich.

In 1884, houses in the area rocked and bells rang when an earthquake occurred. There were three separate tremors.

In the nineteenth century the residents of Harkstead were not as law-abiding as today's residents. At Samford Petty Sessions in February 1885, a labourer of Harkstead pleaded guilty to being drunk in Harkstead Street between 4 and 5 pm. The blacksmith stated that he was driving along and nearly ran over the defendant who was lying in the middle of the road. The defendant, who was an old offender, was fined 10 shillings (50p) and seven shillings and sixpence (37.5p) costs or seven days in prison. As he had no money and his friends were tired of paying his fines for him, he was removed to custody.

In the 1920s and 30s when a person died in the village, the church bell would toll, one toll for each year of that person's life. Joan Abbott remembers playing in the school playground and counting each toll in order to know how old the deceased was. Unfortunately this practice was stopped when war was declared.

Arthur Ransome, the author of "Swallows and Amazons" and other children's books rented Harkstead Hall in 1939. He only stayed for one year as he and his wife found the noises of war too great. Joan Abbott, who still lives in the village, remembers helping the Ransomes in the house.

In the 1970s, Harkstead could boast of having a resident film star. Ida Page thought that her husband, Arthur, would be ideal for the part of the horseman in Sir Peter Hall's "Akenfield", for which auditions were being held. However when she accompanied her husband to the audition and Sir Peter heard her talking, he decided that she would be ideal for the part of the aunt in the film. So Aunt Ida she became and made history in the lovely little film in which Peggy Cole became a very well-known Suffolk



Ida Page with Peggy Cole at the Akenfield premiere

celebrity.

In 1962 the bones of a mammoth, thought to be at least 100,000 years old were found along the shore at Harkstead. Among the bones were traces of sea shells found today no nearer than the River Nile.

In 1987 a Viking gilt bronze harness mount was found on the shore by a metal detecting enthusiast.

The Harkstead Barns project was established in 1991-2 to provide a home for young people with learning difficulties. It was set up by local people and money was raised for it by charitable trusts and local events. Piggeries were renovated for this purpose.

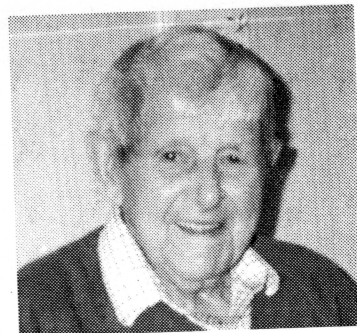
In 1991 Harkstead won the Suffolk Rural Community Council trophies for the County in the Best Kept Village Competition, a success that was celebrated later in that year.

### Old Harkstead Buildings and lost homes

On the corner, left, just past Pear Tree Cottages, going towards Lower Holbrook, there used to be two small thatched cottages and a barn. Mr Arthur Podd's father lived in one of them. Because the dividing line between the two villages went through his house, he used to say 'I have my meals in Holbrook and sleep in Harkstead'.

In the hut in the garden of what is now "Cherrytrees" villagers used to play whist. Mr George Page used his horse and cart to transport people from other villages to the hut. It was also used for a concert on one occasion and the V.E. celebrations were held in it.

In the corner of the garden of Rose Cottage was a small bothy (a hut-like house). For a period of time two, out of work, elderly men lived in the bothy. They had their meals at the Rose Inn. Mr Suckling, who owned the public house and the bothy, took responsibility for them or they would have been homeless.



In June 1996 a former resident of Harkstead, Jack Taylor, died aged 104. Jack had lived on the peninsula all his life and in Harkstead for more than 30 years. For the last few years of his life he lived in Clench House at Holbrook