

PAST TIMES : FURTHER NAYLAND REMINISCENSES

by Chris Hunt

assisted by David Slater and Peter Drew
Conservation Society Open Meeting on June 27th

The Society's chairman, Mike Hunter, introduced Chris Hunt, who is the third generation of Hunts in Nayland. His career was with the Fire Service. He is a bell ringer (Church Tower captain) and member of the Royal British Legion.

Chris's talk took the form of an illustrated walk round Nayland as it was, using archive photos, assisted by newspaper cuttings read by Peter Drew, giving descriptions of accidents and incidents in the village during the late 19th century, when there was much industry and no health and safety rules, until World War II.

The village community was lively and self-sufficient with thriving shops, pubs, 3 dairies, 3 petrol stations (but with no motor cars), the Mill and 3 bakeries. 2 lorry firms and a bus company operated from 5 sites in the village. Accidents were common and included runaway horses, drowning while fishing and being crushed in the Mill.

David Slater then talked about Shaddelows Farm where his father took the tenancy in 1958. Although the farmhouse is in Stoke Parish, much of the land is in Nayland. He explained that the Anchor Marsh initially had cattle grazing but in the 1960s it was ploughed up for potatoes. However, with more traffic in the village and the increase in the size of farm machinery, it wasn't practicable to continue and the land is once more low input grassland, for cattle grazing and silage. Nayland now sustains both intensive and low input farming, which David considers is the right balance.

Peter read an extract from a newspaper report of the 1871 fire at Perry Farm (off Bear Street). The fire was put out by villagers using buckets of water because the fire engine had a leaky hose and couldn't pump more than a trickle of water. A bugle was played to warn people of its pending arrival.

Short silent films of a 1951 British Legion parade at the Jane Walker Hospital, included shots of Dr. MacMichael, the village GP and Hospital Medical officer, together with his wife and daughter, Shirley, who now lives in Stoke Road. Peter read out some of the strict rules and regulations for patients, which was an essential part of the treatment: pubs were out of bounds, walking exercise not allowed in parties less than three people. The second and fourth Sundays were visitors days, when Norfolks ran 5 buses.

Barges or Stour Lighters were shown at Wiston, Nayland & Horkesley Lock. The latter being the shortest distance apart on the whole of the Stour Navigation. Further descriptions of gruesome accidents and drownings were read by Peter. There were 7 wharves along Bear St, including coal and lime.

The annual Nayland National School treat was reported in 1867 – a procession to the Meadow, fun and games and return to the Schoolroom at 4.30pm for tea, then back to the Meadow for more sports.

The final shot was of cows coming up Bear Street from Parkers Farm.

Chris then read some memories of a Nayland resident whose family owned the dairy and bakery at the Old Guidlhall.

Val Munson spoke about her wartime memories of the plane crash in the field beyond Court Knoll, Tendring Hall where the Italian prisoners of war were billeted.

Sally Bartrum talked about living at the Anchor Inn as a child, her parents John and June Curtis took over the pub in 1956 until 1983. In addition to the two bars the inn had 4 large letting rooms, among the many people who stayed there were holiday makers and fishermen, farming students, parents visiting their sons at Windyridge, Flatford Mill artists and also a number of families who were looking for properties in the area. As many as 12-14 people could be accommodated at full board, with all the produce used sourced from the village shops.

Wartime memories included the installation of 4 mortar positions in the village which was a "Nodal" point, not an official "stop line", but of importance being on a road and river crossing.

The Home Guard prepared the Anchor Bridge for demolition, but forgot to remove the explosives which were found later. A doodlebug crashed one night destroying a house at Nags Corner. It was later dredged up and after storage in the Carvers Barn, was found a home in an Essex Museum.

Tom Gardner gave a very interesting Vote of Thanks, with further memories of life in Nayland since he arrived 46 years ago as a 7 year old boy. He commented about the loss of so many business and pubs since that time and said it is so important to cherish and share all these memories, for future generations.