

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

Norwich Mercury 4th January 1902

Two short articles of interest to Blakeney can be found in the Norwich Mercury of the 4th January 1902. The first was drawn to the editor's attention by a friend and it was pure chance that in looking for it in the paper the second article was seen in the next column but one. The item on the Salvation Army is written in magnificent prose and one can imagine it being read aloud in Churchillian style. The second item concerns three members of the Long family, some of whose descendants still live in the village. The Longs have been the source for many local stories but this one does not seem to have been remembered.

Disorderly scenes at Blakeney S. A. Barracks

On Sunday evening a disorderly outbreak occurred at the Oddfellows' Hall, the local stronghold of the Salvation Army, during the progress of the prayer meeting. It appears that during the course of the meeting the "captain" directed the congregation to stand, and certain persons remained seated. This caused a feeling of irritation, and the drummer left the platform to expostulate with the offenders. The expostulations and the explanations seem to have been such as to rouse the warlike spirit of the persuading "soldier" who attempted to ensure by physical force that which he could not accomplish by moral persuasion. The wilful "sinner" immediately answered by rising and striking out right and left. The Salvationist, nothing loth, took up the challenge and a fight ensued, the "soldier" who was much less in size, getting the worst of it. Meanwhile the meeting was stopped, and the local Salvationist forces disposed in battle array. The captain confined himself to the position of a peace emissary, and met with the usual fate of interveners by getting abused by both parties, and was, in addition, severely handled. The "sinners' " friends having no intention of letting the Salvationists have things entirely to themselves joined issue with the forces of General Booth, and a free fight ensued, in the course of which forms were overturned, furniture upset, and windows broken. The captain got some of the rank and file outside, and these in turn assisted to withdraw their comrades and made for shelter. The opposing party had thus the possession of the hall, but the captain, who was busy in the cause of peace, ultimately secured possession and locked up for the night. The excited crowd gradually dispersed. The captain has declared his intention of taking no legal steps in the matter. It may be added that the resident police constable was at the time engaged in a distant part of the beat.

Comment

In 1902 the Oddfellows' Hall was the building on the corner of Morston Road and Westgate Street. It is now a private house. The Salvation Army subsequently used premises across the road in Old Post Office Yard and then, in 1921, bought the former Primitive Methodist Chapel in the High Street. The article is a vivid reminder of the rough and tumble of earlier days, though one is just tempted to wonder whether trouble was intended. But no doubt it really was a coincidence that the police constable was otherwise engaged at the time.



Blakeney Man's Adventure

Details are just to hand of a parlous adventure which befell George Long, sen, of Blakeney, on Friday night, while engaged in a punting expedition. Long's family spend the chief part of the shooting season in a smack fitted up as a house-boat from which they proceed in search of the wild fowl which congregate on the mudflats and in the harbour. On the evening in question George Long, sen, was guiding his gunboat at the Point, and in the semi-darkness the punt appears to have grazed the side of one of the numerous buoys which mark the navigable course of the channel. The frail craft was overturned, and the occupant thrown into the water. Long got clear of the boat, and managed to turn her on her bottom. He struggled up on her bottom, which supported him, and he drifted with the boat, shouting lustily for assistance. The boat continued to drift towards the mouth of the harbour. Happily, his two eldest sons, who had returned to their temporary home on the smack, heard his cries, and got out a small canoe. They managed to save him from drifting to sea. They got him on board the canoe, and he was taken to the smack, where he recovered in a few hours. As a result of his adventure his punt gun and shoulder gun were both lost from the boat when she overturned.

Comment

George Long, senior, was born George Bennington Long in 1856 and was 45 at the time of the incident. He was already coxswain of the Blakeney lifeboat, a post he held from 1896 to 1920. His portrait, painted by John Page of Blakeney, hangs in the church and is said to be a good likeness. He died in 1938 having fathered 12 children: 8 boys and 4 girls. Two of the boys died in the First World War and their names are on the War Memorial. The remaining six boys all spent most of their lives in Blakeney while the girls married and moved away.

The 2 eldest boys mentioned in the article were George and Charles. George Long, junior, was born in 1880, and would have been 21 in 1902, and Charles was two years younger. George soon left the village and eventually went to New Zealand. On the outbreak of the First World War he joined the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and found himself on a beach rather different from that of home: at Gallipoli. On his return to Blakeney after the War he took up musselling and wildfowling. Charles Long succeeded his father as Coxswain and relinquished the post only when the Blakeney lifeboat station was closed down in 1935. He was also the Harbour Master and he and his wife kept the White Horse in the High Street – and between the Wars, George junior, and his wife kept the Anchor Inn just opposite.

The 'smack' referred to in the article might well have been the *Harvest Home* of which the name plate still survives. The article also refers to a punt, punt gun and shoulder gun. In case any reader is unclear what some of these items looked like, the first photograph illustrates all three – and the gunner is George Long, junior. The 'canoe' which came to the rescue was not, of course, of North American type, but the flat-bottomed mussel boat found all along the marshland coast of north Norfolk (though not called by the same name in every harbour). The second photo shows George in his own canoe, using a whim to pull up mussels from deeper water. George died in 1964 and Charles, whose son founded Stratton Long Marine, died in 1952.

More about the Long family can be found in Margaret Loose's book *Random Reflections of Blakeney* published in 1994.