

THE BOOK OF THE BURNHAMS

The Story of the Seven Burnhams by the Sea

The Burnhams Society History Group

The Book of the Burnhams begins with a look at the early history and moves on through the Middle Ages when East Anglia became rich from its wool and cloth weaving. Norfolk was the centre of the early Industrial Revolution and its huge churches testify to this.

Great landowner pioneers such as Coke of Norfolk transformed the nature of farming and this in turn created a new social order in rural areas. The sea also played an important part in the life of the region, with Overy Staithe handling ships bringing coal in and taking out corn until the 19th century.

The coming of the railways opened up the outside world to the county and, later, the rapid growth of game shooting created a thriving industry. Later still tourism and the growth in second-home ownership brought new life to the communities. All these and many other aspects of the past are included, making *The Book of the Burnhams* a 'must read' book for all who love this county.

The Book of the Burnhams is one of the latest of over 200 titles that now comprise the Halsgrove Community History Series. Each book is a reflection of times past and a celebration of the sense of belonging that exists in the community. Halsgrove's development of this series fulfils its aim of working together with communities in collecting and preserving information in published form. The identification and conservation of photographs is of particular importance as such material is all too easily lost; images of people and places fade from memory just as the photographs themselves are subject to physical change.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS & CONTRIBUTORS

A writing team of twelve, including the late Diana Mansell, with help from many others, has compiled the Burnhams Book.

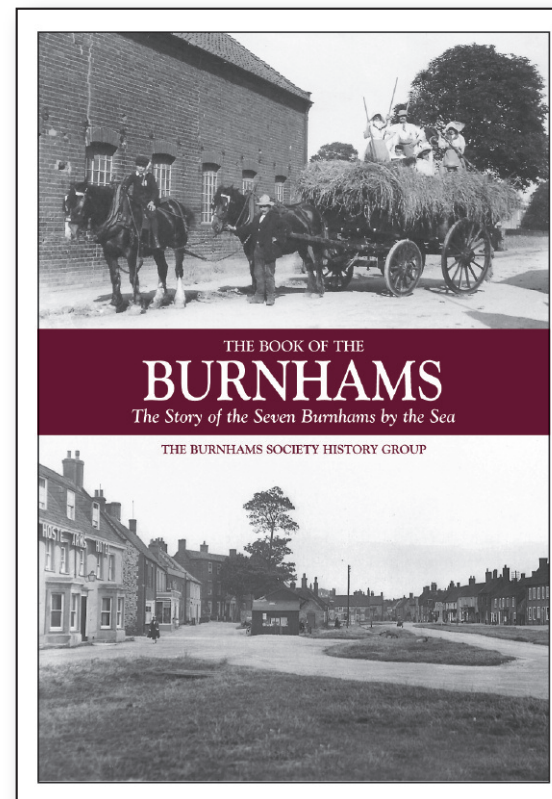
It has been a challenging task to do justice to the seven villages in the Burnhams but through a lively text and over 300 photographs the book will become an essential pictorial record of these communities.

HALSGROVE CATALOGUE

The full Halsgrove catalogue is available free or visit www.halsgrove.com for regional and category listings of available titles.

Halsgrove Publishing
Halsgrove House,
Ryelands Business Park,
Bagley Road, Wellington,
Somerset TA21 9PZ
Tel: 01823 653777
Fax: 01823 216796
www.halsgrove.com
e-mail: sales@halsgrove.com

HALSGROVE TITLE INFORMATION



Format: Hardback, 160 pages, 297x148 mm, including over 300 historic photographs
Price: £24.99
ISBN: 978 0 85704 098 5
Imprint: Halsgrove
Published: October 2011



**Great Books from
your Local Bookseller**

THE BOOK OF THE BURNHAMS



Above: Ivy House farm 1960s

Above left: Salvation Army bandmen and officers in 1929.

Left: Gilbert White



Above: Wedding Celebration at Burnham House



Right: Captain Woodget and son

Below: Tower mill c.1910 with 2 sails canvassed



◆ THE BOOK OF THE BURNHAMS ◆
The Story of the Seven Burnhams by the Sea

Entrance to Betty Lane

Roy's Bridge 1910

Jimmy Riches' shop 1931

12

◆ INTRODUCTION ◆

which had an impressive bell in Jacobean times 400 years ago. Today the bell is placed outside under a cupola. At the end of **Betty Lane** in Overy Town there is a triangular green with the old market cross upon it. In the days before the establishment of Overy Staithe the market cross was highly significant in this the only square in the Burnhams. In those days few could read or write and to strike a bargain men placed their hands together on the cross in the presence of witnesses.

Turning right along the Wells Road into Burnham Market we pass over Roy's bridge and on the left-hand side there once stood St Andrew's church. A feature of the times before the cultivation of the turnip and the mangel wurzel, and when fodder was unavailable to nourish a large number of sheep and cattle through the winter, was that livestock were slaughtered in the autumn and salted for winter use. To provide a variety of fresh meat, pigeons were kept in large numbers, and every house of importance had its dove house, or dovecote, some of which were elaborate edifices and are to be seen today fully preserved as interesting structures.

The Great Local Hero

The greatest local hero was Admiral Lord Nelson who was born in the rectory at Burnham Thorpe where his father Edmund was rector. Edmund was also part rector of Burnham Sutton, half rector of All Saints', Sutton cum Ulph, and half rector of St Mary's, Norton. It was usual at the time for a parson to have as many livings as he could get hold of and to live in the parish that pleased him most, employing curates at £60 a year each to do the work of the others. Nelson, then a captain, returned to England at the end of 1787 with his young wife whom he had married abroad. Edmund vacated the rectory at Thorpe and moved into Church House in Burnham Ulph which he called his 'town residence', next to The Victoria pub, now Victoria House. Church House was small by rectory standards and was close to his church at Burnham Ulph. If his sermon was judged to be going on too long his housekeeper would softly open the ventry door as a sign that it was pudding time and the sermon would quickly come to a close.

Nelson 'On the Beach'

Nelson's ship the *Ramses* was paid off and he was 'on the beach' for five years on half pay and deemed to be inactive despite constantly applying to the Admiralty for new employment. This resulted in many visits by Nelson to Burnham Sutton; he also spent much of his time at Overy Staithe sitting on the bench outside Flapstaff House, which is still there, staring out to sea waiting for orders from the Admiralty signalling that his services were needed once again.

Dependence on Agriculture, Employment and Unemployment (see chapter on agriculture)

Many farms were run down and abandoned, but for those who produced their own corn there were two mills to grind it and local bakeries to which the farmer might sell some of it. The mill is Burnham Overy Staithe was operated in the 1920s by water and steam and then by water alone from 1929. Roy's mill was powered by an unusual combination of wind and water, but by the late 1920s was described as a gas-operated mill and by 1937 as oil operated.

Pubs and Shops and Services

Employment on a farm before 1929 was not guaranteed. Those out of work were directed to the stone pit at the top of Beacon Hill to break stones for use on the roads.

Today there are 55 shops in Burnham Market and two pubs, The Hothe and The Jockey. At one time there were five pubs in the village with another two in Overy Town that are now closed. The Hero in Overy Staithe and The Lord Nelson in Thorpe continue to flourish. One of the best remembered shops in Overy Staithe was Jimmy Riches' post office and general store owned and run by him for 62 years. He also hired out bicycles at threepence per hour. There was also Thompson's sweetshop renowned for Sally Thompson's ice-cream. Painted on her delivery van in the 1930s was the claim (patronised by the medical profession), the village doctor bought her ice-cream for his three sons.

Sally Thompson's shop 1930s

13

Example of a double-page spread.