

AFTERTHOUGHT

The first mention of Burnham Overy as a harbour appears to be in May 1066 when Tostig Godwinson, brother of King Harold, anchored his sixty ships on his way north to the battle of Stamfordbridge. He then "*harried the neighbourhood*", but either the loot was too poor – or too rich to bother about – so half his fleet from Sandwich in Kent returned home to eventually be disbanded a month before William the Conqueror landed near Hastings in October of that year.

The harbour at that time would certainly have been a little further inland somewhere along the course of the river Burn, but it is interesting that as many as the sixty boats and more we see so often in the more modern harbour at Overy Staithe is nothing new, though Tostig's would undoubtedly have been larger sea-going craft!



THE BOATHOUSE



The Story of a Granary
by
Audrey Earle

Clark

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Boathouse is very special to all its Members and it is a great privilege to have been asked to write this little book – I hope the kind friends who have helped so much in its production will approve the result and forgive any shortcomings in the story of a not quite four-square building of great character, and the people who have guarded its purpose over the years. My most grateful thanks to them all for their interest and encouragement, and rather especially to Kay North, Juliet Carr, Nell Dew, Peter and Melba Beck, Julie Atkins, Leslie Green, William Scoles, Bridget Everitt and Bill Haines who have provided so much detail to the bare facts of this small slice of local history.

References:- The Deeds and Company Records of the Boathouse; the 1824 Ordnance Survey Map reproduction and A History of Norfolk by Susanna Wade Martins.

AUDREY EARLE
Burnham Market, 1993



The first Ordnance Survey of 1824 shows Burnham Overy Staithe as a small village and port with a signal station on the site of the now decapitated Gun Hill, a windmill and a post mill in the New Road. Along the waterfront were several maltings and granaries with the maltster's house at the west end and the coastguard's Watch House to the east, close to the great bank reclaiming thousands of acres from the salt marsh and the inroads of the sea. There were three docks for the coasters and small trading vessels which frequently arrived in ballast with Lincolnshire chalk, or coal, and sailed down the narrow channel loaded with grain for various destinations, including the Flemish ports and Holland. The great granary in the central position on the waterfront – now the Boathouse – is one of the few chalk buildings in Overy Staithe, and was built a little later than the others which are mostly of brick and flint or pebble construction. Behind the waterfront were six coastguard cottages, and the chief coastguard's house among others, along the line of the coast road and the road running inland to Burnham Overy Town, in the Manor of Pomfrets, which is the older part of the parish, clustered round the Brothercross and the Church of St. Clement.

On June 5th 1824 Thomas Thurlow Wiseman of Burnham Overy in the county of Norfolk, merchant, "*craved the favour*" of the Lord of the Manor to lease a piece of waste land in Burnham Overy harbour to stake out and excavate for use as a dock. The land in question measured some ninety by fifty feet and included the "*Right and Privilage of placing and keeping Mooring Posts for the purpose of mooring Vessels lying in the said Dock*" – the annual rent to the Lord of the Manor was two shillings and sixpence of lawful money. As there are no records to the contrary it is reasonable to suppose that Thomas



Lino Cut by Julian Cory-Wright

Wiseman traded as a merchant, and built the granary towards the end of his life, probably in 1840 - 41. It would seem the building was constructed at different times because the chalk is knapped to the west of the central gable on the north elevation and the brickwork does not marry with the rest, which suggests that this end was the later addition. On September 9th 1842 the sale of his property was held at the Hoste Arms Inn, Burnham Westgate, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and was conducted by Mr. Seppings in nine lots of property and land in Burnham Overy Staithe, Overy Town and Burnham Westgate, together with a one-third share in the trading sloop The Friends of 54 tons, built in Wells in 1841 and trading from Overy to Newcastle. Lot I of this sale consisted of the dwelling house now know as The Garth, which at that time was the residence of Lieutenant Jackson R.N., Coast Guard Officer at a salary of £24 per annum; and a field running northwards behind the house to the staithe upon which was "*a spacious, substantial, and newly erected GRANARY and COAL YARD; the Granary has 3 floors which comprise 7 Chambers or Rooms, and a Counting House; there is also Deal Yard, Chaise House, and Stable with Hay Loft over adjoining, possessing a frontage next the Staithe of 113 feet, or thereabouts. Opposite the Staithe and within a few yards of the Granary and Coal Yard is an excellent Dock, 90 feet long and 50 feet wide, and a privilege of placing mooring posts upon the banks for the purpose of mooring vessels lying in the Dock, and also the liberty of placing piles and boards on the site of the Quay or Wharf 60 feet westwards of the Dock*". This graphic description sets the scene for the building which has dominated the central waterfront at Overy Staithe for over a hundred and fifty years.

On January 3rd 1843 William Mack of Burnham Sutton and Thomas Thurtle Mack, farmers, together with George Wiseman of Burnham Overy purchased the Granary from the executors of the Will of Thomas Wiseman and formed a partnership until December 1847 when Thomas Thurtle Mack became the sole owner. There are no records of the Granary during this period but it is known that Burnham Overy Staithe flourished as a small and busy port under the jurisdiction of Wells with ships of up to a hundred tons or so trading mainly in malt, coal, corn and oil cake. It is not difficult to imagine the noise and bustle along the quay with the great teams of wagon horses clattering

in with their loads of grain and strange sailors making their way to the several public houses in the village, while high above the roofs of the granaries the masts and spars of their ships stood out sharply against the backdrop of the salt marsh and the sand dunes. The London packet boat called at regular intervals on passage to Newcastle, and there was a Stage Coach service for mail and passengers from Burnham Market. Big changes were at hand, however, with the first Norfolk railway opening in 1844 between Norwich and Yarmouth and within the year the long-awaited connection to London was completed; this fast cheap transport was especially important for perishable goods. By 1866 the Heacham to Wells line was in operation via Burnham Market, and continued to Fakenham a year later. The advent of the railways brought a gradual decline in coastal trading and the beginning of mass tourism – Yarmouth's role in this market started with a special day trip for school-children in June 1846 from Norwich, Wymondham and Attleborough at 3d per head!



The Quay in the early 1900's



The Boathouse as a granary in the early 1900's

By 1892, when the Royal West Norfolk Golf Club was founded at nearby Brancaster, the coast was slowly becoming popular with visitors who did not want the delights of the growing seaside resorts of Hunstanton and Cromer, but preferred the quieter form of holiday. Overy Staithe was still a small trading port and the granaries along the quay operational but in a much modified way. A great character towards the turn of the century was the Harbour-master John Stoker, who, at the age of twenty one was given six months to live but at a ripe old age was listed in Kelly's Directory of 1925 as still doing the job. The First World War brought irreversible changes to life in Norfolk as elsewhere, and many did not return from the conflict, as the long list of names on the village war memorial shows. Those who survived returned more aware of the possibility of a better standard of living from the former poverty and limited horizons of remote country areas.

The Granary was sold freehold in 1921 by the trustees of John Savory of Bumham Overy to William Henry Riches, a farmer and coal merchant. The description of the building in the Bill of Sale does not differ greatly from that of 1842 except for the addition of "2 Cake Houses..... Take in Floors with hoisting crane, Manure House, and a cart entrance from the Quay....."

The Granary was in the occupation of Sidney Everitt of the Watermill who gave possession on completion of the Sale. By now the coastal trading had finished – the last small cargo of coal was unloaded for Sidney Everitt in 1923 – and the creek had silted up to a narrow shallow channel. The Granary was mortgaged in 1924, and a year later the executors of William Riches sold the property to John Lorrimer, a partner with William Tabberer in the textile company of Poole, Lorrimer and Tabberer of Leicester, Coventry and the North. William Tabberer had discovered Overy Staithe, loved the place and bought The Garth; he introduced his friends the Lorrimers to the village and they stayed at the Ship Inn. Later the same year Maurice Lorrimer purchased the more or less derelict granary at the west end of the waterfront and converted it into a comfortable family house for holidays with a private anchorage. About this time too the maltster's old house was converted into the ever-popular Moorings Hotel, owned by the Phillips family, with a steadily increasing clientele of visitors who returned year after year to play golf and sail dinghies in the creek. Slowly the whole character of the Quay changed and the great central Granary became a boathouse after the return of William A (Billy) Haines and his family.



Billy Haines



The Boathouse as a granary in the early 1900's

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Billy Haines

Billy had served in the Merchant Navy and with the London Fire Brigade before moving back to Overy Staithe. The three Haines brothers married three Tomkin sisters – Charlie emigrated to Canada while Billy and Fisher stayed in Norfolk; all three died within a year of each other in 1952 - 3. Billy and Annie lived in one of the Coastguard Cottages where their younger son was born in 1925; Arthur the eldest was then nine years old. The family lived there for several years before moving into a small flat they had made in the east end of the Boathouse.

By the middle twenties George Cleaver had come to join Billy and his brother Fisher on the Quay; they had one or two boats for hire and a small flat-bottomed barge for bringing shingle from the beach. George, a tall and rather grizzled man with a distinct twinkle in the eye and a salty wit had also been in the Merchant Navy and sailed several times round the world. He stayed with the Boathouse until his retirement many years later and was a popular and ever helpful friend to the sailing fraternity.



George Cleaver



Sheila Disney

Until the Second World War there were a number of huts on the east point sand dunes which were supplied with milk, newspapers and other essentials by boat from the village, a service carried out by Billy Haines and members of the Lane and Thompson families. Among the frequent visitors and hut owners were Sheila Disney and a friend who first came to Overy Staithe in 1910; she was then the Games Mistress at Roedean School near Brighton and was proud of her reputation of being easily audible across three hockey pitches! She was a keen bird watcher and beachcomber gathering coal, apples and any other useful flotsam washed up from passing ships. She also perfected the art of catching small flat-fish in the creek between her toes! In the early years of the War when the dunes became a firing range and the huts were dismantled Sheila settled herself in the west end of the Boathouse in a small partitioned-off section of the first floor loft reached by a very rickety ladder; she lived there for several years before moving to Chapel Lane. When she died in 1970 a great character of the Quay was lost.



Billy and Rowena Combe rigging 'Polar Star'

The late twenties and early thirties saw a big increase in dinghy sailing and the Boathouse was filling up with sailing gear and boats were parked along the grass verge of the old coal sheds. Billy ran a passenger boat called Rosemary to the beach and the annual Regatta was a popular event with keen local competition in the rowing and sailing races. At about this time Harry May, a local schoolmaster and expert sailor, bought the second of the Overy Twelve class dinghies called Liz for young Elizabeth Morrison who, nearly three decades later as Elizabeth Cory-Wright was to found the Boathouse Company and become its first chairman. She was taught to sail by Billy and Fisher as well as her step-father Douglas Carruthers, the well-known explorer and naturalist. These boats were very popular for many years and were ideal for the shallow sailing in the creek, Polar Star, Why Worry, Ballerina, Puffin, Diana and Stella were but a few – Billy raced the slightly larger Bluebird belonging to the Lorrimers very successfully, and she is still the pride and joy of the third and fourth generations of the family. At the end of the sailing season the annual dinner took place in the loft of the Boathouse, with a concert party – and no doubt an enormous fire risk.

The last years before the Second World War saw a steady increase of summer visitors to the Moorings Hotel, mostly from London, the Midlands and Cambridge. Many different classes of boats sailed and raced in the creek and harbour, and two or three passenger motor boats like Billy's Rosemary and the Dorothy from the hotel ran a service to the beach at about a shilling per head for the return trip. The Boathouse was the focal point as it is today, for the annual Regattas which were becoming larger with more races and good prizes. Billy Haines was an immensely popular figure on the Quay with his sturdy figure and rather rolling gait; he had a charming manner, kingfisher blue eyes and a tanned weatherbeaten face usually wreathed in a smile. He inspired confidence in all attempting the skills of sailing, and his pungent advice to the owners of recalcitrant engines to "*undo everything you can and blow through it.....*" was usually successful!

By August 1939 the long shadow of war stretched across a lovely summer and on September 1st Germany invaded Poland – at lunch in the Moorings that day Jack Shakespeare, a member of one of the first families to come to the hotel, announced to an already agitated dining-room "*I think I can see the masts of the German Fleet behind the dunes.....!*" There was an electrified silence before knives and forks started clattering again and anxious faces peered northwards across the marsh. No-one at that moment could possibly have guessed that, in fact there were several months of cold war ahead.

Billy returned to the Merchant Navy for a short time before he and Annie lived briefly in Gong Lane before moving to Fuschia Cottage in the New Road in 1941. Overy Staithe was in the coastal defence zone and both the sandhills and the beach were out of bounds because of mines and an artillery range. There were frequent attacks on Norfolk air bases and spectacular dog fights over the county. The Moorings was taken over by the Army for a time, and in the lead-up to the Normandy landings Holkham beach was a training area for the Guards Armoured Division. Annie Haines and her sister Beattie were keen members of the local Red Cross Detachment and the Ship House – at this time the home of Gwen Matthew Smith, wife of the famous colourist – was the village First Aid Post. There was very little activity on the Quay; Arthur Haines had joined the Territorials in 1939 and served with the Royal Artillery in the U.K. and later with the 8th Army in Egypt. He was badly injured in the legs during the Italian campaign after a lorry

accident with lasting results on his health. He married Marie after the War and joined his father at the Boathouse.

John Lorrimer sold the Boathouse in 1943 to his friend William Tabberer of The Garth to level up the latter's property, on the understanding that his car could be kept in the lock-up old store at the west end of the building. William Tabberer must have felt a little exposed to the increasing traffic along the Quay for he planted a stout hedge between his house and the Boathouse so that no-one could see him in his bath!



Three Haines in a boat

By now all the old granaries along the waterfront and the tarred Watch House had been converted into houses for summer holidays which were let or lent when their owners were not in occupation, and together with other houses in the village, the Tower windmill and the much loved Moorings Hotel, greatly increased the amount of visitors coming to the village – many of whom returned to Norfolk over the years and became permanent residents in the district; it was almost as though they had served their apprenticeships at Overy Staithe.



The Haines Family at Flagstaff House

Captain Woodget, Master of the famous clipper Cutty Sark, had lived at Flagstaff House from, 1910 till 1926 before moving up the Creek Road to the corner house called The Anchorage, and from then until 1946 his daughter-in-law, Ruby Wordingham, and her family occupied the substantial bow-fronted house at the east end of the Quay and next to the Watch House across the road. In that same year Billy and Annie Haines moved to Flagstaff from Fuschia Cottage. Life by now was returning to something like normal though the village had suffered many losses from the War and the list of names on the memorial was considerably longer.

At this time a dark-haired boy of eleven could frequently be seen jumping off the school bus in Overy and running down to the Quay to join Billy for a trip to the beach in Rosemary, or in the converted lifeboat Alexandra – this was Peter Beck from Burnham Market who, thirteen years later, was to become the driving force of the Boathouse Company and a worthy successor to Billy Haines. He spent his holidays working with Billy and Arthur on the boats, musseling, or carting shingle from the beach with George Cleaver. The Boathouse was by

now doing repairs and winter storage and the upper floor had become a sail loft. Moorings were put down in the creek and though the dock had largely silted up, the Quay was still usable though in a rather delapidated state. "Young" Bill Haines joined the Royal Navy in 1942, aged sixteen and a half, and served in HMS Suffolk in the Far East and Australia. He left the Navy shortly after his father's death in 1952.

The ownership of the Boathouse had passed in November 1945 to William Tabberer's Widow Kate, and on her death eight years later the whole property was inherited by their two daughters, Kay North and Marjorie Skelton. Peter Beck meanwhile had joined the Royal Navy in 1951 and served in minesweepers and destroyers; he had attained the rank of Chief Shipwright by 1959 when he joined the newly formed company of Burnham Overy Boathouse Limited, and he has been the extremely popular and efficient Manager ever since.

Billy Haines and William Scoles did frequent musseling trips across the Wash in Alexandra, and in December 1950 they were returning from such a trip in the dark and in a blizzard when they went to the assistance of a blazing yacht with four people on board; two men and a woman were rescued nearly dead with cold but the third man was lost in the icy water to the great distress of Billy and his friend. There was a certain mystery about the whole incident which never seemed to be properly cleared up — Billy was awarded a richly deserved Vellum by the R.N.L.I. He was much affected by this tragedy and a short time later became ill with heart trouble and died in 1952 aged only sixty-two. His family and the village were devastated as were his countless friends from far and wide.

A Fund was set up in his memory under the trusteeship of Mrs. Mora de Paula who owned the former granary next to the Lorrimers, Audrey Earle from Burnham Market and Harry May, which raised enough money to place a memorial tablet to Billy on the north wall of the Boathouse, construct a slipway on the Quay, and provide a handsome silver cup for a sailing race for Overy-based boats which, over the years, has been a very special annual event. A leather-bound book with the names of all those who had subscribed was presented to Annie Haines. Young Bill helped his brother Arthur at the Boathouse for a time, and also had a job as an electrician at Sculthorpe Air Base before emigrating to Australia with his wife Pat, and their family under the assisted passage scheme.

On January 31st 1953 a devastating tempest in the Irish Sea stove in the stern doors of the car ferry Princess Victoria and swamped her with considerable loss of life before sweeping round the north of Scotland to create havoc with a tidal wave down the east coast as far as the Thames and the Dutch coast. The damage was immense — at Overy the bank was breached in several places, allowing the surge to inundate the fresh marshes as far as Wells, and on the Burnham Norton side the banks were overpowered to flood the Water Mill, flow up the valley to Overy Town, where the houses round the Brothecross were under about eight feet of water, and on nearly to Burnham Market. The tide had come in four hours too early on the evening of February 1st, lashed by storm force winds; Alexandra was carried half-way up the Creek Road and a vast mass of tangle and wrack lay over everything. The Boathouse and houses along the Quay were badly flooded but mercifully there was no loss of life in Overy. The Army moved in quickly to fill the breaches in the bank with sandbags and the R.A.F. did wonderful work with huge hot air drying machines, but it was many weeks before the mess was cleared up; the salt tide levels can still be seen on some buildings in damp weather. Though there had been violent tidal surges along the east coast many times before, that of 1953 was probably the worst because of the scale of the disaster and the resulting damage. Slowly the village dried out and by the summer things were looking fairly normal. Arthur and George were very busy at the Boathouse with an expanding business and Marie looked after the books; she watched from the sitting-room window in the flat to see who was sailing in the various hired boats and made out the bills accordingly. Overy Staithe had by now become very popular and many new faces were seen on the Quay — the Moorings was full and several houses and the Windmill were let for the holidays.

All classes of dinghy were coming to sail at Overy in these post war years as well as motor boats and small cruisers; some were left for winter storage in the Boathouse and during 1963 - 64 the big barn at Marsh Farm was leased from Holkham Estate as an overflow. By the middle fifties Arthur Haines's war injury was becoming a problem and he found heavy lifting and wearing thigh boots more and more difficult, but he struggled on and George was a great help in every way.

In 1957 the owners of The Garth decided to sell the Boathouse, and in September of that year an agreement was signed between Kay

North and her sister with Elizabeth Cory-Wright who had gathered together a group of friends who were prepared to raise the money to purchase the building to ensure that its character and purpose were not impaired, and a year later the property passed into the ownership of the newly formed company of Burnham Overy Boathouse Limited. It was hoped that the company would just be the overall landlords and that the business so solidly founded by Billy would continue as before with Arthur as the tenant, but he was not very inclined towards this plan and this, coupled with the state of his health, caused him and Marie to decide to move to Wroxham, where he was offered an office job, and later to Rhyl in North Wales. Their leaving Overy was very much regretted by everyone; they were so much part of the village and the life of the Quay.

The first Directors of the Company were all people who had known and loved Overy Staithe for many years; most of them sailed and all were keen conservationists. Elizabeth Cory-Wright was elected Chairman supported by Lord and Lady Leicester, Mrs. Mora de Paula Sir Solly (later Lord) and Lady Joan Zuckerman, Audrey Earle, Mrs. Freda Lorrimer, Major Stephen Ralli, and Michael Cory-Wright, with Rodney Sadler from Dersingham as the Company Secretary. The policy was to ensure continuation of the purpose for which the Boathouse was being used and, above all else, to maintain the peaceful and unique beauty of the waterfront and harbour. No dividend would be paid to any Member, and all profits would be ploughed back to maintain the building as far as possible in its original form; to improve the service to all customers of the business, though it would never be the intention to expand to a greater extent than was consistent with safety and the space available to all users of the creek. These ideals have been jealously guarded by all Members of the Boathouse over the years, and the several improvements to the building have always been very carefully considered so as to conform with these policies.

In December 1959 Peter Beck married Melba Cooper of the well-known Wells fishing and lifeboat family – they moved into the Boat-house flat and were soon settled into life on the Quay. A year later the old stable block in the yard was rebuilt as a workshop and garage, a small lavatory was installed in a corner by the south gable of the main building, and a window to display chandlery was made in the north elevation. Also in 1960 a clothing shop was opened upstairs in the



Bobbie Atkins



Julie Atkins at the boathouse door

west end of the Boathouse – formerly occupied by Sheila Disney – which was very capably managed by Bobbie Atkins (now Luffman) of Overy Staithe, assisted by her daughter Julie, until 1965 when she retired for health reasons and Julie took charge. The shop remained there until 1972 when larger premises were made in the central part of the Boathouse immediately behind the chandlery to form one shop managed by Peter and Julie; she has been a valued member of the Company ever since.

In 1964 the field to the south and west of the Boathouse was purchased from the owners of The Garth as an additional boat park as well as an amenity preservation. The Fairways Committee, fore-runner of the Harbour Trust, was formed at this time to safeguard and maintain the creek and harbour for all users. All the various interests in the village elected representatives to serve, and Robert Wilson Stephens joined the Committee on behalf of the Boathouse. There had recently been a dangerous situation involving several people sailing and he was asked to request the Fairways to consider appropriate safeguards and suitable warnings of adverse tidal and weather conditions. In 1965 Robert became a Director of the Company; he had known Overy since a little boy when his parents bought two cottages in Creek Road

and he attended the P.N.E.U. school called St. Monica's run by Sister Mabel Palmer, a "brown" nun, while her sister Miss Ada, gave piano lessons separately from the school.

The Company was greatly saddened by the death of Stephen (Tommy) Ralli in 1966; his experience and local knowledge was invaluable to the Boathouse in the early years.

Price—TWO PENCE

Burnham Overy Staithe

Programme of REGATTA

on Friday & Saturday,
July 15th & 16th, 1932.

President—Lord Fermoy, M.P.

Vice-Presidents—Capt. Lunn, J.P., Dr. Crossley-Holland,
Dr. Sharp, D. Carrolers, Esq., S. Phillips, Esq.,
J. E. Smith, Esq.

Chairmen—Rev. C. E. Hales.

Vice-Chairmen—Mr. H. May.

Hon. Treasurer—Mr. D. Carrolers.

Hon. Secretary—J. Gordon.

Committee—Messrs. T. H. Calver, S. Everett, F. Hales,
W. Hales, H. May, F. Osborne, J. V. Hales, J. Stoker,
P. Seeling, J. Scalet, J. Thompson, E. Thompson.

Stewards—Messrs. T. H. Calver and F. Osborne.

Finisher and Handicapper—Mr. S. Everett.

Captain—Messrs. S. Everett, W. Redwell, P. Seeling.

Prizes will be distributed at the Dance Hall, Moorings
Hotel, at the conclusion of the Regatta.

H. S. STILES, PHOT. WILLS

The Overy Staithe Sailing Club was originally formed in 1923 but lapsed to become the Regatta Committee until the early 1960's when it was reformed with an ever-increasing and well organised membership. Gone were the days when the Regattas were planned by the small committee sitting on fish boxes in the sail loft; gone too some of the memorable moments in the sailing races such as when Alan Bell, the

RACING RULES.

- 1 Any Boat contesting without its proper Racing Colour shall be disqualified.
- 2 The Races specified in this Programme are subject to any Conditions and Alterations that the Regatta Committee may deem fit to make, and shall be construed strictly in accordance with whatever Rules the Committee lay down.
- 3 Should any dispute arise, details of same must be specified in writing, and lodged immediately after the Race, with the Committee, whose decision shall be final.
- 4 In any event two must start or no Race, three to start or no 2nd prize, four to start or no 3rd prize.
- 5 All Boats competing must be entered under their real names.
- 6 All Boats in Sailing events must stay round Turning Buoy, gybing prohibited.
- 7 Any Boat throwing ballast overboard while competing shall be disqualified. No pole or spar to be used in Sailing Races.
- 8 No Skiffs allowed to compete.
- 9 Colours, corresponding with the Programme, to be worn out at the Committee Tent, and must be shown prominently.
- 10 All Boats are entered at Owner's risk.
- 11 No claim can be made against Committee for any loss, accident, or damage sustained by any Competitor, or his Boat, in any event.

starter, having run out of blank cartridges, crossed the creek and fired live into the marsh, and on another day when the same gun jammed Sheila Disney stood at the finishing post and shouted BANG as each boat crossed the line! Long gone too are the regular visits of Gray's Fair to the Hard at Regatta time when the waterfront became alive every night with garish lights, brassy music, and all the thrills of the roundabout and fun of the fair set against the serene backdrop of the creek and marsh.

During the next four years some important improvements were made to Peter's flat — a third bedroom was converted from part of the loft to accommodate increasing family requirements, the kitchen was extended over the old coal house and a dormer window added to the south elevation. By now Peter and Melba had three small children; Julie, born in 1962, has the unusual distinction of being wheeled across the frozen creek in her pram at high water in the very severe winter of the following year. Peter and George bicycled and played ice hockey against a sparkling snow-covered background of marsh and large blocks of frozen salt along the tideline, and Doctor Chappel of Fakenham tried his hand at skating in front of the Boathouse. Mark Beck was born in 1964 and Paul four years later.



Julie, Paul and Mark Beck

In 1967 Roddy Ralli from Stanhoe became a Member of the Company and later in the same year took his father's place on the Board; his wise counselling and refreshing sense of humour were a great asset to everyone.

The village has seen many great flood tides over the years – some calm with water like blue silk lapping on the grass verges along the Flagstaff wall and nearly into the Boathouse, but among those more frequently remembered are the great winter tempests of 1953, 1976 and 1978 when the shops were badly flooded and a lot of the stock was lost. The great storm of July 1968 was, in a sense, perhaps one of the most dramatic, being in daylight and high summer, with the creek full of boats which were tossed in all directions like toys; many were very badly damaged or lost altogether.



The tempest of July 1968

Mora de Paula resigned as a Director in 1970 owing to illness and the distance from her home in Saffron Walden – she was a much valued founder member and greatly missed. The family had come to Overy at much the same time as the Lorrimers and had converted the next-door granary at the west end of the waterfront.

Frank Holland succeeded Rodney Sadler as the Company Secretary in 1971 until his death six years later when James Bruce, the Burnham Market accountant, took over for the following two years; then the Boathouse was extremely fortunate to interest Leslie Green in the Company's affairs and he was elected to the post. Leslie had just retired after many years experience in insurance and had come to live in Burnham Norton.

The south gable of the Boathouse needed extensive rebuilding at this time and this work was very sympathetically carried out to match as nearly as possible with the rest of the building.

Bill Haines returned from Australia in 1978 and ran the local shop for a few years which was a great asset to the village. The family, however, decided to return to Victoria as most of their family were there.

On April 17th 1980 Peter Beck and Robert Archer took part in a dramatic rescue outside the harbour – they managed to save three children from a dismasted and waterlogged dinghy which had capsized several times in gale force winds, and collected two others who had been left on the west point beach; tragically the man with the party was drowned. Robert Archer was only sixteen at the time and the whole episode again underlined the question of increased safety measures and warnings of adverse weather conditions. Peter was awarded a Vellum from the R.N.L.I. for this very courageous rescue in extremely dangerous conditions.



Peter and Melba Beck with their family

The Harbour Trust, replacing the Fairways Committee, was established in 1981 with Trustees, and under the chairmanship of Lord Coke. The working scope was widened and all the interests in the village elected representatives – the Parish Council, fishing, wildfowling, residents, the Sailing Club and the Boathouse – Michael Cory-Wright was elected to represent the latter and he served on the Trust for several years. In this same year further alterations were made to the clothing shop, and the retirement of Philip Thain, the senior partner of Thain Wildbur of King's Lynn was greatly regretted – he had taken an enormous interest in the workings of the Boathouse; his advice was always more than welcome and his dry humour very much appreciated.

Gradually the safety measures for the harbour came into operation and the Sailing Club procured an inflatable rescue boat which cut the time to assist anyone in trouble racing by more than half from the much slower boats like Florence Emily, Audreys Earle's longshore crab boat, and others who had coped over several years in a far less crowded creek. An evergreen problem was the traffic congestion on the Quay which had increased to the point of causing nearly total congestion in the summer – there would seem to be no solution, and many feel that it is something which has to be tolerated with the huge increase of visitors to the area.

In 1985 the Boathouse lost two valued friends; Elizabeth Leicester a founder member and staunch supporter of the ideals which had promoted the formation of the Company, died after a long illness – and Philip Thain, who helped so much over many years. They were much missed by everyone as was Lord Leicester who had died nine years earlier. On a happier note, however, Stephen Heffer, of the well-known Cambridge family, was elected to the Board, as was Lady Glenconner a year later when she took her mother's place. Anne had known Overy Staithe since she was a child at Holkham and was always a keen sailor.

By now further improvements had been made to the building; central heating was installed for the flat, workshop and shop. The bathroom was enlarged and a utility room made in the south elevation. Improvements to several windows had also been made a few years before in the same year that Margaret Llewelyn was elected to the Board in place of her mother, Freda Lorrimer, who had resigned owing to travelling problems.

In 1987 a great project was started by Mark Beck, now a naval architect with a Master's degree in Science, and a group of friends. They decided to build a boat and sail round the world; the idea caught everyone's imagination and the Company was happy to provide space in the field boat park for the undertaking which took over four years to complete. Slowly the form of a steel-hulled Bermudan Cutter took shape dwarfing the dinghies in the field, and the yard hummed with the noise of hammering and power tools. Mark and Paul Fletcher were the chief builders while the rest of the future crew continued in their jobs to help finance the project.

By 1988 Elizabeth Cory-Wright's health was causing concern and prevented her coming to Overy which was very sad for her family and friends. She had known the village since a child and eventually inherited her mother's house next to the old Moorings Hotel. As the founder and first Chairman of the Company she played a vital part in formulating the ideals of a concern which would serve the interests of all who sailed, preserve the Boathouse and the unique quality of the Quay, and play its rightful part in relevant village affairs. Her care and concern for the Boathouse and everyone connected with it was paramount, as was her love of Norfolk as a whole. Michael Cory-Wright resigned from the Harbour Trust on account of health problems and the distance from their home in Hertfordshire. Happily, Robert Wilson Stephens was able to join the Harbour Trust on behalf of the Boathouse, and in August of that year Roddy Ralli was appointed acting-Chairman and filled the position until his tragic death in a hunting accident in 1992. Another sadness was the death in 1989 of Margaret Llewelyn, who had been a Director for several years, after a long illness; she was very much missed and had carried on the Lorrimer family connection when her mother retired.

In this same year Elizabeth Cory-Wright's daughter Gillian Gunnis and Paul Zuckerman became shareholders and later she and Russell Hawkes were elected to the Board – he had been coming to Norfolk for holidays since the late fifties and became a keen golfer at Brancaster. His financial experience and advice is of great value to the Boathouse. Margaret Llewelyn's son, Andrew, has also become a shareholder, and it is very satisfactory for the Company that the continuity is so well preserved by younger members of the founding families, while at the same time new members are coming in as a counterbalance.



Peter and friend

Over the years Peter and Melba have made a great contribution to the life, not only of the Boathouse, but of the village as a whole – Peter is a Coastguard Auxilliary, a member of the Parish Council and its Chairman for eight years, as well as being the moving force behind the Regatta and Sailing Club organisation. Melba helps everyone in all sorts of ways and always provides a warm welcome at the flat. Their family are rather scattered but frequently seen at the Boathouse – Julie now married and nursing in Norwich, Mark about to embark on the Big Boat adventure, and Paul, with a B.Ed. degree, a Physical Education master at a school in Kent. They are a very close-knit family and Julie and her brothers have done so much for the Boathouse ever since they were old enough to row a boat, and they still do whenever they can. Julie Atkins is a familiar and popular figure in the clothing shop and fully conversant with the intricacies of the chandlery sales, while Leslie Green runs a small and efficient company office on the floor above.

The Boathouse has its own special way of seeing in the New Year with a big bonfire and mulled wine on the Quay which, over the years, has drawn increasingly large crowds. The scene is a dramatic one with the building looming large behind the roaring flames and showers of sparks rising high in the night sky, sometimes accompanied by fireworks and always by the singing of Auld Lang Syne. And so another

year begins – at first the Quay is quiet with great skeins of geese flying in a winter sky and much activity in the workshop with painting and repairs. By Easter some brave souls get their boats put into the creek heralding the hectic rush of the summer months before the gradual arrival of shorter days and the stillness of golden autumn weather.

In 1992 the great moment arrived when the Big Boat was ready to leave her home port – once again a tall mast rose above the roofs and her sixty-one feet overall towered above everything else in the boat park. Unfortunately she was too big to launch at Overy Staithe so it was planned to take her to Wells by road and put her over the side of the quay, but the elements dictated otherwise in the form of a severe gale, so she was finally launched at Norwich after a dramatic journey on a low loader, which had a puncture en route! She sailed down river to Burgh Castle where she was named OveryAction by Melba shortly afterwards. After a spell of chartering she returned to Overy for a hail and farewell visit, and a party in the field in a marquee next to the boat park.



The Big Boat leaves her home port

On the evening of August 29th a large crowd gathered along the entire waterfront to await her arrival from the harbour mouth for a brief turn-round at the Quay before high water. Slowly, as the light began to fade into a golden pearly glow, OverAction glided majestically up the creek, showing her navigation lights and dressed overall, led by Peter and members of his family in Maggie May, his converted lifeboat. As she drew level with the Watch House the crowd did a Mexican wave, and a great cheer rippled through their massed ranks; there were few dry eyes or lumpless throats as she turned on her engine into the tide right opposite the site of the original quay and old dock, on almost the exact spot where Thomas Wiseman's sloop The Friends would have moored a hundred and fifty two years before. With this great achievement it seemed as though the story of the old Granary, which so successfully became a Boathouse, had come full circle.



Photographed by Peter Beck