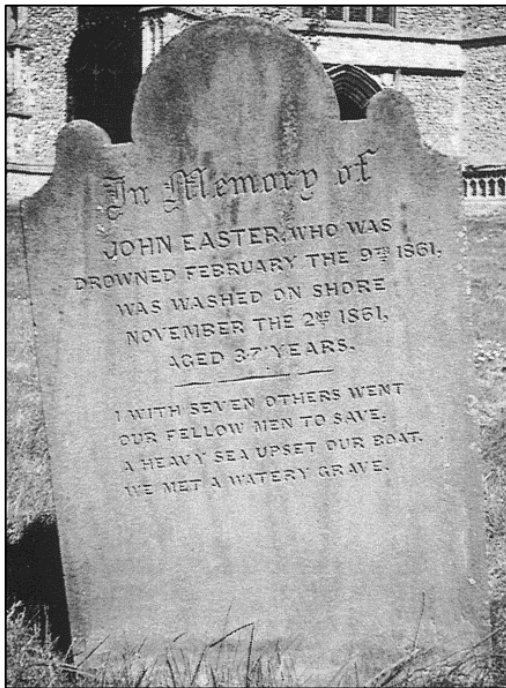




THE BLAKENEY DISASTER - 1861

**“In attempting to save others,
they became themselves the victims.”**



Sue Gresham
Research Volunteer

Researched **July 2019**
Updated **January 2021**

FOREWORD

Searching in newspaper archives for the terms Blakeney and shipwreck yields numerous results but one in particular caught my attention, a rescue resulting in great loss of life which occurred in Blakeney in February 1861.

When I did further research, I discovered that two items in the Blakeney Area Historical Society's magazine had referenced the same event.

John Wright wrote in 2000 that the existence of gravestones in Blakeney churchyard recalling the event was well known but little was recorded about it. He had posed the questions: did anyone have more information? and who were the men who drowned?

Pamela Peake's research in 2004 - on the wider subject of Mariners and their Memorials - identified from newspaper reports the names of the men who lost their lives.

Since 2000 and 2004, information has become more accessible and it has been possible to add to what is known about the disaster in 1861, with more detail about the event itself, the people involved, and also to identify the other men of Blakeney - whose names have not previously been known - who went out to rescue men from the stricken ship and who survived.

Tracing the families of the men who lost their lives, and discovering how closely some were related to each other, reflects the impact that this disaster and the tragic loss of life must have had on the community in Blakeney. Equally tragic was that two of the men's wives died within just a few years of their husbands' deaths, both leaving young families, also how all the widows, with little or no income, must have struggled to support themselves. It is evident and unsurprising that the wives and families of men who survived the disaster fared better and more prosperously.

This research grew very much from the primarily and originally intended local maritime history perspective to include condensed biographies of those whose lives were claimed by the 1861 disaster, those who attempted to rescue their colleagues, and of all these men's families. While the "brief" I set myself has much enlarged from what I envisaged, I hope the different elements researched will be of equal interest.

Since my original report appeared on the website in July 2019, two people - mentioned in my Acknowledgements - contacted me with much new information, including a personal account of the disaster written by John Leslie, an Apprentice on the ship that was wrecked. His account is fascinating in itself but it also adds much to what is known about the circumstances of the disaster and factors not previously recorded which had particular significance. More importantly it presents a different account, borne out by other known facts, of the number of boats which went out to the rescue of the wrecked ship.

NOTES

Censuses

Reference is made in this report to the UK Censuses, which were taken on the following nights, each a Sunday:

1841	6th June
1851	30th March
1861	7th April
1871	2nd April
1881	3rd April
1891	5th April
1901	31st March
1911	2nd April

1911 Census

The 1911 Census gives more detailed information about each household than the preceding ones and, unlike those in the 19th Century, was completed “by, or on behalf of, the Head of Family or other person in occupation, or in charge, of this dwelling” rather than by an Enumerator.

The Census requested information about the property and the person completing it had to state “the Number of Rooms in this dwelling (House, Tenement or Apartment) and to count the kitchen as a room but not “the scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop”; throughout this report, references to the 1911 Census reflect this.

Like earlier Censuses, people’s professions or occupations had to be stated but, in addition, the “Industry or Service with which worker is connected” and whether each person was an “Employer, Worker or Working on Own Account” and whether or not someone was working “carrying on Trade or Industry” at home”.

Similarly, Birthplaces had to be given but also now the nationality of anyone born in a “Foreign Country”.

Two very significant changes were to ask – in a section “Particulars as to Marriage” - for each married woman the number of years the marriage had lasted, the total number of children born alive, the number still living, and the number who had died.

A section titled “Infirmity” asked that if anyone shown on the Census was “Totally Deaf” or “Deaf and Dumb”, “Totally Blind”, “Lunatic”, “Imbecile” or “Feeble-minded”, the infirmity should be stated against the person’s name and “the age at which he or she became afflicted”.

DISSEMINATION

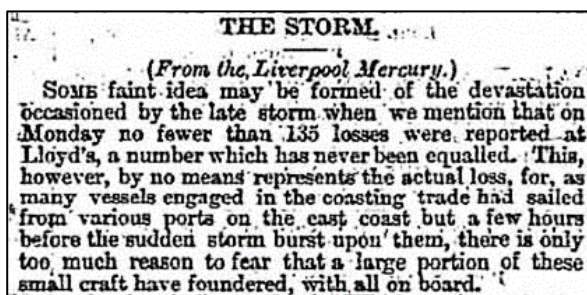
This research may be used free of charge for academic or other not-for-profit purposes but the material must be acknowledged as the work of the author for the Blakeney Harbour Association. Prior permission for commercial or any other use or purpose(s) should be sought from the Secretary of the Association on info@blakeneyharbourassociation.co.uk

CONTENTS

The Great Storm – 9th February 1861	1
Ships in Distress and Loss of Life	2
The Wreck of the Favorite – A First-Hand Account	4
The Favorite – The Ship Wrecked	7
The Disaster and Rescue – What Really Happened?	8
The Lives Lost	9
The Public Appeal	10
The Men Who Were Lost	
John Johnson	12
Thomas Johnson	13
Samuel Johnson	13
William Johnson Warnes	14
John Neal	15
John Easter	17
Jacob Gravelin	18
Michael Massingham	19
The Rescuers	
Murrell, Edward and William Baines	21
Thomas Bambridge	23
James Dew	24
John Dew	25
William Digman	26
William Jarvis	26
Bartholomew Jary	27
William Kemp	28
Peter Kitwood	29
James Lee/Lovey	30
Thomas Loads	31
William Pell	31
John Waller	32
William Warnes	33
The Wreck Register – 1861	34
The First Lifeboat – Brightwell	36

THE GREAT STORM - SATURDAY 9TH FEBRUARY 1861

The newspaper "The Scotsman" carried a report on Friday 15th February 1861 of the devastation caused nationally by a huge storm which had raged across the country, resulting in numerous maritime losses, particularly – the accounts suggest – on the North-East and East coasts, including the disaster which occurred off Blakeney.



The Scotsman – 15th February 1861

"Some faint idea may be formed of the devastation occasioned by the late storm when we mention that on Monday no fewer than 135 losses were reported at Lloyd's, a number which has never been equalled. This, however, by no means represents the actual loss for, as many vessels engaged in the coasting trade had sailed from various ports on the east coast but a few hours before the sudden storm burst upon them, there is only too much reason to fear that a large portion of these small craft have foundered, with all on board."

The report went on to describe the scale of destruction and loss caused by the storm, giving specific examples.

"In the Tees bay, a fleet of colliers exceeding sixty in number are announced to have been wrecked.

A sad sacrifice of life took place on the coast at the mouth of the bay near Redcar. The brig Lady de Crespignie, Captain Price, belonging to Colchester, and the schooner Apollos, of Schiedam, laden with coals, was carried onto the Redcar rocks, where they became total wrecks, and every soul on board them met with a watery grave. A very heavy sea broke in over the beach and the following vessels were driven ashore:- The Roman Empress, Captain Driver, bound to the Mediterranean from Shields, on the Marsk Sand; the brig Mary from Sunderland for the Thames; the Eustace, Captain Thompson, master, bound to London from Sunderland; the brig Odessa, bound to London; the Koh-i-Nor, Wildridge master, from Shields for London; and the Marie Clotilde, bound to Hartlepool. Most of these ships were going to pieces when the last accounts left.

The Whitby lifeboat, which capsized on Saturday last, by which twelve out of thirteen persons unfortunately perished, does not belong to the National Lifeboat Institution. She was built locally from local designs. It was said that the man who was saved was the only one of the crew who had an efficient life belt, which was on the plan of those worn by the crews of the boats of the Lifeboat Institution.

In addition to the casualties formerly reported from Wicklow, we learn that the following vessels, all belonged to Whitehaven, were on shore in the vicinity of Bray:- The New Draper, all hands saved; the Brothers, all hands saved; the Roland Hill, only one man saved; the Western Trader, all hands saved."

The Scotsman – 15th February 1861

A week later, the "Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper" of Sunday 17th February 1861 reported, under the title "Heavy Gales of Wind – Great Loss of Life and Shipping", "The destruction amongst the shipping on the north-east coast during the fearful gale on Saturday, the 9th, has seldom been equalled. Upwards of 150 vessels are reported by Lloyd's agents at the various out ports to have been wrecked or stranded, and this sad havoc appears to have occurred within a period of six or eight hours. In many instances, ships were seen to founder, with the whole of their unhappy crews, in endeavouring to run for a place of shelter."

The storm took its heavy toll on many coasts and harbours on the East Coast but in Blakeney the significant loss of life was not of those serving on the vessels themselves but of local men who went to the assistance of a ship in distress.

SHIPS IN DISTRESS AND LOSS OF LIFE

At the height of the storm, at daybreak on Saturday 9th February, two ships were seen to be in distress off Blakeney, both having gone aground.

The *Favorite* – official number 32865 – was a 366 ton barque, registered in Quebec (hence the spelling of the ship's name) and transferred to the Port of Banff, Scotland on 8th April 1856. She was under the command of Captain Arthur Symmers (spelled Summers in some reports) and carrying a cargo of coal when, on the night of Friday 8th February and while on voyage for Torre del Mar from Hartlepool, she went ashore at Warham Hole, on the Blakeney West Sands, about a mile to the West of Blakeney Harbour.

Arthur Symmers, a Master Mariner, was born circa 1834 in Aberdeen and aged about twenty-seven when the *Favorite* went aground. He was awarded his Master's Certificate on 10th January 1859.

WELLS, NORFOLK, FEB. 9.

The barque *Favourite*, Arthur Symmers, master, of Banff, and from Hartlepool to Torre del Mar (Spain), with a cargo of coals, came on shore at Warham Hole, near Blakeney, early this morning, and will become a total wreck. A boat proceeded from Blakeney to endeavour to reach the vessel to save the crew, but after rounding the point capsized, and drowned nine hands, named John, Samuel, and Thomas Johnson (brothers), John Neal, Jacob Graveling, Michael Massingham, John Easter, William Warnes, and another (name unknown). This has thrown quite a gloom over this part of the coast, as the Blakeney beachmen are noted for their readiness to proceed to vessels in danger. The crew of the *Favourite* were saved in another boat. There is also on shore on the Blakeney beach the Kingston schooner of Plymouth, from Hartlepool to Plymouth, with coals; crew saved; vessel will become a wreck. It is now blowing a heavy gale from the east, with a tremendous sea on this coast.

The Sun (London) – 12th February 1861

WELLS, NORFOLK, FEB. 9.

The barque *Favourite*, Arthur Symmers, master, of Banff, and from Hartlepool to Torre del Mar (Spain), with a cargo of coals, came on shore at Warham Hole, near Blakeney, early this morning, and will become a total wreck. A boat proceeded from Blakeney to endeavour to reach the vessel to save the crew, but after rounding the point capsized, and drowned nine hands, named John, Samuel, and Thomas Johnson (brothers), John Neal, Jacob Graveling, Michael Massingham, John Easter, William Warnes, and another (name unknown). This has thrown quite a gloom over this part of the coast, as the Blakeney beachmen are noted for their readiness to proceed to vessels in danger. The crew of the *Favourite* were saved in another boat. There is also on shore on the Blakeney beach the Kingston schooner of Plymouth, from Hartlepool to Plymouth, with coals; crew saved; vessel will become a wreck. It is now blowing a heavy gale from the east, with a tremendous sea on this coast.

MELANCHOLY LOSS OF LIFE ON THE NORFOLK COAST

A fatal catastrophe took place in the vicinity of Wells on Saturday morning, about nine o'clock. While the gale was at its height, a barque, called the *Favourite*, Captain Summers, bound to Torre del Mar from Hartlepool, was driven on shore on the Blakeney West Sands. The moment the ship was seen, a party of eight fishermen nobly ventured out to the rescue of the crew of the abandoned barque. The sea was running very high, and on nearing the sand the boat was capsized, and, melancholy to relate, the whole of the poor fellows were drowned. Their names were Michael Massingham, Jacob Graveling, John Esther, John Neal, Samuel Johnson, William Warnes, John Johnson, and Thomas Johnson. Three of the bodies have been picked up. The crew of the stranded ship were afterwards rescued by another party of fishermen who put off from Blakeney. The barque will become a wreck. Another vessel was lost in the same place, the schooner, Kingston, from Hartlepool for Plymouth.

MELANCHOLY LOSS OF LIFE ON THE NORFOLK COAST.

A fatal catastrophe took place in the vicinity of Wells on Saturday morning, about nine o'clock. While the gale was at its height, a barque, called the *Favourite*, Captain Summers, bound to Torre del Mar from Hartlepool, was driven on shore on the Blakeney West Sands. The moment the ship was seen, a party of eight fishermen nobly ventured out to the rescue of the crew of the stranded barque. The sea was running very high, and on nearing the sand the boat was capsized, and, melancholy to relate, the whole of the poor fellows were drowned. They were all married, and have left large families. Their names were Michael Massingham, Jacob Graveling, John Esther, John Neal, Samuel Johnson, William Warnes, John Johnson, and Thomas Johnson. Three of the bodies have been picked up. The crew of the stranded ship were afterwards rescued by another party of fishermen who put off from Blakeney. The barque will become a wreck. Another vessel was lost near the same place, the schooner, Kingston, from Hartlepool for Plymouth.

The Norwich Mercury – 13th February 1861

Further reports of the disaster appeared in local and regional newspapers subsequently, "The Norfolk News" describing in its edition of 16th February that eight fishermen from Blakeney had "nobly ventured out" and put off two boats in an attempt to rescue the crews from the two stranded ships, a distance of about four miles; they left the quay at about half past seven in the morning.

The sea was running very high, much stronger than the crews expected. After rounding the Point and crossing the bar at the entrance to the harbour, and as they neared the sand, one of the boats hit a heavy wave and capsized.

A witness from the second boat, the *Sailor's Friend*, described that the wave "caught her on the quarter and hove her completely end over end".

**BLAKENEY.
EIGHT LIVES LOST.**

A most melancholy accident occurred at Blakeney on Saturday morning, by which eight families and a large circle of friends have been plunged into the deepest grief. At daybreak the barque "Favorite," of Banff, from Hartlepool for Malaga, Capt. Summers, laden with coals, and the brigantine "Kingston," of and for Plymouth, from Hartlepool, also coal laden, were seen in distress, having got aground. Two boats were manned for the purpose of rescuing the crews from their perilous condition. They left the quay at about half-past seven, the wind blowing briskly from the north-east, a heavy sea was rolling, and in going over the bar one of the boats capsized, and the whole of the crew (eight fine strong fellows) were drowned. Their names are as follows:—John Johnson, Samuel Johnson, Thomas Johnson, William Johnson Warnes, John Neal, John Easter, Michael Massingham, and Jacob Graveling. They were all married men, and some of them had families.

When the awful tidings reached the town, the cries and shrieks of the wives and relatives of the deceased were of the most heart-rending character. The larger boat went to the rescue, and the bodies of John Johnson, Thomas Johnson, and Warnes, were recovered and brought ashore, where Dr. Sumpter tried the Marshall Hall method of resuscitation, but life was extinct; an inquest has been held on the bodies. It is hoped that the public will raise a fund for the benefit of the widows of the poor fellows, who, in attempting to save others, became themselves the victims.

The crews of the two vessels were saved, but the "Favorite" is a wreck, and the "Kingston" is likely to become a wreck also. The materials were all saved.

The Norfolk News – 16th February 1861

**BLAKENEY
EIGHT LIVES LOST**

A most melancholy accident occurred at Blakeney on Saturday morning, by which eight families and a large circle of friends have been plunged into the deepest grief. At daybreak the barque "Favorite", of Banff, from Hartlepool for Malaga, Capt. Summers, laden with coals, and the brigantine "Kingston", of and for Plymouth, from Hartlepool, also coal laden, were seen in distress, having got aground. Two boats were manned for the purpose of rescuing the crews from their perilous condition. They left the quay at about half-past seven, the wind blowing briskly from the north-east, a heavy sea was rolling, and in going over the bar one of the boats capsized, and the whole of the crew (eight fine strong fellows) were drowned. Their names are as follows:- John Johnson, Samuel Johnson, Thomas Johnson, William Johnson Warnes, John Neal, John Easter, Michael Massingham, and Jacob Graveling. They were all married men, and some of them had families.

When the awful tidings reached the town, the cries and shrieks of the wives and relatives of the deceased were of the most heart-rending character. The larger boat went to the rescue, and the bodies of John Johnson, Thomas Johnson, and Warnes, were recovered and brought ashore, where Dr. Sumpter tried the Marshall Hall method of resuscitation, but life was extinct; an inquest has been held on the bodies. It is hoped that the public will raise a fund for the benefit of the widows of the poor fellows, who, in attempting to save others, became themselves the victims.

The crews of the two vessels were saved but the "Favorite" is a wreck, and the "Kingston" is likely to become a wreck also. The materials were all saved.

The Marshall Hall resuscitation method referred to - devised in 1856 and adopted by the Royal Humane Society - was based on Hall's contention that, if left in the supine position, a victim's tongue would fall back and obstruct the airway. Hall's manual resuscitation method was to elevate the victim's chest and immediately roll him/her from stomach to side while, in addition, pressure was applied to the victim's back while he/she was prone. The applied pressure on the back would generate exhalation and be released when the person was on their side for inhalation.

The other ship aground off Blakeney at the same time, the 93 ton Plymouth registered *Kingston* - official number 18337 - was bound for Plymouth and also laden with coal when she went aground. The *Kingston* was first registered to Bridgewater on 5th February 1847 with tonnage of 103 and re-registered to Plymouth in 1857 with a reduced capacity of 93 tons.

While newspapers report that the *Kingston* was also likely to be a wreck, the Mercantile Navy List of British Registered Vessels shows that the ship apparently continued in service until 1869.

THE WRECK OF THE *FAVORITE* - A FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT

John Leslie – Crew Member

The following verbatim account of the wrecking of the *Favorite* was written by John Leslie (1845-1918), then an Apprentice on the *Favorite*, and is taken from his memoir of his life at sea entitled "From Apprentice to Ship's Husband – The Life of a Sailor in the Latter Half of the Nineteenth Century (a Merchant Service)". Some punctuation has been added to John Leslie's original account to make the document more easily readable. "Ship's Husband" was the term for an agent appointed by the owner of a ship, and invested with authority to make the requisite repairs, and attend to the management, equipment, and other concerns of the ship.

John Leslie was baptised in Aberdeen on the 26th April 1845, son of Thomas Leslie, carpenter and ships-master, and Ann Cadenhead. John went to sea when he was about fourteen years old and was sixteen when he was joined the *Favorite* as an Apprentice in 1861.

John Leslie kept notes during his apprenticeship and throughout his maritime career which, it is assumed, were the source for his journal or memoir, written during his retirement. His first-hand account adds much to what is known about the circumstances of the 1861 disaster. Of particular significance are: given the age and condition of the *Favorite*, the obvious concerns among the crew about her seaworthiness; the first rescue boat that put off from Blakeney took a shorter, more dangerous channel to the *Favorite*; there were apparently three boats that went out from Blakeney not two as reported in the newspapers; and, despite the loss of life within their own community, the great compassion, hospitality and kindness that the people of Blakeney showed to the rescued crew.

John Leslie described initially how he and his fellow crew members received orders to join the steamer *Victoria* bound for Newcastle on their way to join the *Favorite* at Hartlepool. Their previous ship, the newer *Parisian*, a 748 ton sailing vessel was registered in 1854.

"We landed at Newcastle after a jolly passage singing etc with a lot more tars who were going to the Tyne to look for ships, staying overnight under charge of Captain Somers, who was to command our new venture, we trained to Hartlepool next day. Going to the docks along with the Captain, we saw a lot of old collier sailing craft, among the biggest and most ancient of which he pointed out was our ship. I can now recollect with what feelings of dismay we beheld this old "Balahoe". The skipper, I think, even grinned at our hesitation, even if momentary, before we ventured on board. We felt we had been done "fruit", indeed we did question if she could hold in small coals. The barque, for such she was, had been from Quebec last and had laid up all winter having her bowports out to give her air, in addition she had got a stiffening of coals in to keep her steady in order to get out her ballast, so covered all over with coal dust, we got our clean clothes, bedding and chests on to this dirty dilapidated hooker, the only redeeming point of which was the fine smell of roast etc coming from the galley, which was formed out of part of the deckhouse situated between the foremast and main hatch, and which we were told was to be our berth. On entering it we could hardly see one another, one of my feet went down a hole on the deck, which made me relive my feelings, and sent the others in fits. We sat on our chest-lids disconsolate enough talking over the new situation, all our money or most of it was gone, otherwise I believe we would have bolted, such a come down from the *Parisian*. We were now joined by the two apprentices who had been over the side giving the craft a dose of "British Paint" i.e. coal tar before the craft got too deep in the water. The new acquaintances we now found had been in the *Favorite* some time, the elder a big curly, red cheeked loon from the country near Banff had been three years in the barque and considered he was quite a sailor, the other was as big but was hardly wise enough to be a sailor or anything else, he did all sweeping, carrying in of grub etc. at Geordie's command, and altho' he kicked a bit at our commands, he soon gave in and was loblolly boy (*a boy or man acting as a medical orderly on board ship*) for the lot

The first and second mates treated us as if we were full blown tars, as they had no others, so we had to do all sailor work. In the getting ship ready for sea, we managed, I must say, fairly well, so that by the time we hauled out from the coal tip loaded we had got the *Favorite* provisioned and ready for sea. Two Abs (*Able Seamen*) and a painter (Captain's brother) were shipped so that in numbers we mustered a fair crowd of sixteen all told, of whom thirteen including carpenter; the old cook and steward, all lived in the Deck House."

He then went on to describe the events leading up to, during and after the wrecking of the *Favorite*.

“At length we towed out of dock, passed clear of the Heuck bound to “Torre del Mar” in Spain, the weather was hazy, wind light from S.E. direction so we had a few tacks out of the old craft, which we managed all right, watches were set. I got into the Second Mates, we had now to take our regular trick (2 hours) at the Helm or the “Wheel” as it is termed, altho’ we only took a trick now and again in the “*Parisian*” we were quickly getting experience. I had the “Wheel” from 2 am to 4 am, sail set and a steady S.E. wind but hazy weather, barque was heading about S.S.W. on the port tack, when I was relieved going to our house. I had turned in to my bunk (an upper one) and was soon asleep, but was soon rudely awakened by getting a violent crack on the forehead, I hardly knew how or where from, but while scratching my poor cranium I felt sundry awkward shakings as if the old ship was being pummelled by something that made her tremble all over. “We”, the watch below, were all awake now, “surely we’re ashore”, said one. We were not long in doubt for a knock or two at the door with a handspike and the shout of my chum (who was in another watch this time) “turn out boys, the ship’s ashore”. Ship was now bumping fairly hard and took a big list to leeward, sending the chests flying, we soon got on our clothes however and, on deck, barring the bumping and the lee-scuppers full of water, there didn’t seem cause for much alarm, especially when I saw the Captain promenading the half poop with a roasted fish and bread in his hand thus taking an early breakfast. We got a cup of coffee hurriedly and then got out two boats, slinging the stream or third anchor on a light spar over the gunwales of the two boats and bending a new coil hawser or tow-rope on to it, we cast the anchor well to windward, took the rope to the windlass after laying the square sails a “shiver” and started to heave. Her head began to turn. “Hand to the wheel” sings out the skipper, I jumped to the port, but it soon gave me an electric shock, for the ship now bumped as if she would break herself in pieces. One heavy bump sent the poop capstan flying over the lee quarter, just clear of the wheel. Things were getting serious, no farther would she move except during a heavy bump, but stuck fast again when the bump was over. By this time a large boat came alongside. The wind and sea fast increased, all hope of saving or floating our ship was vain. A second large boat now came alongside, told us we were on Blakeney Sands and the sooner we got out of the ship the better, and indeed it was getting serious. As the boats were not Institution Life-Boats they offered to take our personal effects if we were quick about it, so the last order the Captain gave was “Get your “dunnage” men into the boats”, then a scrimmage for our chests, bedding etc, was soon over. All was bundled in to the boats, a leg of beef hanging under the Main Top was lowered into them as well as some cabin stores, such as tea, loaves of sugar, currants, cheese etc. I recollect being at the weather side of the cabin companion hatch passing them up when a crowd of rats suddenly trooped past me and flew up the mizzen rigging just abreast of the hatch. They could as easily have made for the boats, I really don’t think we could have refused them a passage. “Come on, come on, the wind’s increasing fast”, “Everybody on board”, “Cast Off”, and away we went for the shore. We could not then see for the haze. The cat had made a leap from the rail on my shoulders and clung fast giving a mew of terror, but stroking it down and speaking to it, she gradually eased her grip, began to purr but didn’t care about being removed, so I let remain. As the sail was hoisted up and oars taken in, we had now time to look around us. The old barque was now getting smothered with spray and nearly over on her “Beamends”, I confess none of us *Parisians* (*John Leslie’s fellow crew members from their former ship, Parisian*) were sorry, a good job said we, will get a better ship next, at any rate we cannot get a worse, we thought. As we proceeded shorewards, we passed a boat similar to the one we were on being taken ashore in “bottom up” but as the sea was now angry, did not attempt to do anything with it. It had left along with the two boats we were in but, taking a near cut, got capsized among the breakers that lay off some distance and its crew of eight were all drowned. They had attempted a dangerous though shorter channel to the “wreck” in order to cut out their neighbours, so as to claim the Life-Boat money awarded by the Life-Boat Institution for Life-Saving. This circumstance, tragedy we might call it, damped our otherwise jubilant spirits at getting rid of our old craft so easily for we had not the look of, nor did we feel shipwrecked sailors, but this sad misfortune made it look a stern reality especially as we drew near a low muddy creek running through a sort of morass and saw a lot of people waiting us, and the cries that got up from the women when they heard the fate of the first boat, it was indeed a sad scene, to think that we all were saved, and fully a third of their men had perished, made us feel very uncomfortable with a kind of inward conviction that we somehow had been the cause of their misery.

Contd/over

The boatmen told us they would wait for the tide to take up the boats to the little harbour of Blakeney, but we could walk there in the meantime. It was a long muddy walk, quite two miles I think. I see the lot of us yet, with the Captain carrying his chronometer, accompanied by Lloyds Agent in front, leading the way, and we shipwrecked lot with some of our loose belongings over our shoulders ("pussy" still on mine) bringing up the rear. At length we got to the Village and got a kindly though sad welcome. We were taken into the "Inn" and made much of by the kind-hearted jovial big countrymen plying us with home brewed and quaint questions. We were in clover now for nearly a week, living on the best the people had, the leg of beef came in handy also. Sunday being a beautiful day, some of us went to see the place Nelson was born at, others including myself walked over to the sands (being an extremely low tide) to see the remains of our old craft. There she lay with her stern washed away and broken up as far as the mizzen mast. From there forward she was all intact, indeed the old boat wanted a good deal of force to break her up and was a better ship than she appeared to us at first sight, for the planking and frames were quite sound, and big enough for a ship of more than twice her tonnage, while the heads of her red copper through fastenings shone (the action of the sand washing about the hold) like copper jelly pans. She had been strongly and expensively built at Montreal, and as I after-ward learned, was built for and commanded by Captain Allan, the founder of the famous "Allan Line", who had ran her successfully with general cargo and passengers in the Clyde and Montreal trade, and thus one may say, our old defunct boat had had her day and was actually the precursor of the line. We learned that we were all to be sent on to London through the Shipwrecked Mariners Society, us apprentices to join the barque "Florida" discharging cargo in Commercial Dock. Our village friends gave us an impromptu concert the night before we left, with quite a fair amount of beer and tobacco, where the "Bonded Stuff" went I don't know, I presume the Captain arranged that matter, although we consumed as much of the cabin stores as we could lay our hands on.

We drove up to Cromer in country carts and entrained for London under charge of the First Mate, who got 10/- from the Shipwrecked Mariners Society Agent to buy us refreshments on the journey to London, my share of which was a bun and a glass of beer. The Mate and Geordie had their dinners while we waited outside and all the balance of the cash left for us seven boys, was barely sufficient for the above-mentioned refreshment. We arrived at Shoreditch Station London after a twelve hours journey, our luggage being left at the Station, the Mate and Geordie left us kicking our heels at the Station tired and hungry. I thought the best place we could go would be the "Sailors Home" if we could only find it. After a good many inquiries and as many tramps we reached there and I, having explained to the Superintendent who and what we were, the kind old gentleman took us to the buttery where we did justice to the cold meal etc. set before us. We had during the evening the feeling of being heroes, having to relate our adventures to the different groups of boarders in the "Home" among which were a lot of Deeport (*Deeport was a fictional port, a renaming of Aberdeen*) boys, apprentices on Deeport Ships loading in the London Dock, a great many of which were on the Deeport Register, and were amongst the finest of the then Mercantile Fleet, steamers at this date (1861) being few and only employed on the passenger and goods coastal service, the ocean lines being in their infancy.

Eight years after the disaster at Blakeney, John Leslie married Margaret Coutts in 1869; a son, John Coutts Leslie, was born in 1874. Margaret died on 6th January 1898 and Leslie married again to Margaret Hector in 1899; they had two sons.

In his long maritime career, John Leslie sailed around Britain and worldwide and commanded the following ships:

1868 - *Brothers of Wick* – Brigantine – 183 tons; 1870 – *Matagorda* – Barquentine – 178 tons; Brothers of Wick – 178 tons; 1872 – Barquentine – *St. George* – 472 tons; 1873 – *Colonial Empire* – Ship – 1,304 tons; 1876 – *Gosshawke* – Ship – 1,283 tons; 1881 – *Perseverance* – Barque – 1,296 tons; 1882 – *Invercauld* – Ship – 1,314 tons; 1885 – *Moy of London* – Ship – 1,696 tons.

John Leslie stopped sailing when he was aged about fifty. In 1898, John Leslie was described - on the record of his father-in-law's death - as a "Shipowners' Marine Superintendent".

John Leslie, of The Briars, Bielside, Aberdeen, died on 26th October 1918.

THE FAVORITE – THE SHIP WRECKED

John Leslie described in his memoir that the *Favorite* “had been strongly and expensively built at Montreal ... for Captain Allan, the founder of the famous Allan Line” and “was actually the precursor of the line”.

Alexander "Sandy" Allan (1780 – 1854), was a Scottish sea captain and businessman who, in 1819, founded the Allan Shipping Line which went on to become the seventh-largest shipping line in the world and the largest privately owned. Allan retired twenty years later, having gained great personal wealth and also recognition for his major contribution to Scotland's commercial interests in the early 19th Century and to the establishment of the Firth of Clyde as an international centre for shipping.

Allan, with his brig, *Jean* - a ship which, during the Napoleonic Wars, held the record for the fastest crossing between the Firth of Clyde and Quebec City – established trade between Greenock and Montreal at a time when trade with Canada was still in its infancy. He made Spring and Autumn voyages between the two ports, the small cargoes which formed the loading of the ship of this early period in the Canada trade were largely bought on ship's account and the Master of the ship was both navigator and merchant trader.

With this success came expansion and, in the winter of 1824, Allan commissioned the *Favorite* to be built for himself and his co-owners. Allan had command of the ship from 1825 until his retirement in 1831.



The *Favorite* was built and launched in Montreal but materials for her construction were shipped to Canada from Scotland. The ship could have been built equally well and probably better on the Clyde but Allan's decision to have it built in Canada was probably an investment in anticipation of future favours on the part of the Canadian merchants with whom he did business.

The Allan Line then saw further expansion and more vessels were added to the Line. Four of the five ships built subsequently between 1830 and 1841 were also built in Canada.

The *Favorite*, appropriately named, was apparently much in demand as a safe and speedy conveyance, both of goods and passengers in the Clyde and Montreal trade; it was on the *Favorite* that two of Captain Allan's five sons received their nautical training.

As, effectively, the first ship of the Allan Line, the *Favorite* must have been of “state of the art” design and construction when she was built. However, by 1861, the ship was thirty-seven years old and John Leslie and his fellow crew members were perhaps justified - when joining the ship at Hartlepool - in their initial, significant misgivings about her condition. Already the age of steam was replacing sail and the first Allan steamship was built in 1854, rapidly followed by three others.

John Leslie's memoir records seeing the “dirty, dilapidated ship” which had been laid up all winter; it was a comedown from their previous ship, the *Parisian*; were it not for the crew having spent most of their money, they would probably have left the ship; coal dust filled the deckhouse; John Leslie's foot had gone through a hole in the deck. When the *Favorite* went aground, the crew hoped for a better ship next time for they could not have had “a worse one”.

His hankering for the *Parisian* is understandable; she was a much newer ship, of 748 tons, registered in Aberdeen in 1854, so thirty years younger than the *Favorite*. The once proud precursor of the Allan Line had become an “old defunct boat” which “had had her day” but it is for speculation whether, in the face of a huge storm that had caused the loss of many other ships, the condition of the *Favorite* was a factor in her being wrecked.

Originally an expensively and strongly built ship, John Leslie observed – seemingly almost with some fondness - that while the *Favorite's* stern was washed away and broken up as far as the mizzen mast, she was otherwise – from there forward – all intact.

Despite his criticism of her, John Leslie acknowledged that “the old boat wanted a good deal of force to break her up and was a better ship than she appeared to us at first sight, for the planking and frames were quite sound, and big enough for a ship of more than twice her tonnage, while the heads of her red copper through fastenings shone like copper jelly pans”. He perhaps owed his life or lack of injury to the solidity of the old ship.

THE DISASTER AND RESCUE - WHAT REALLY HAPPENED?

There are variations and inconsistencies between (all) the newspaper reports of the disaster and the rescue attempts at Blakeney and John Leslie's first-hand account casts further doubt about their accuracy and some of the details given in them.

The wording in the newspaper reports is further ambiguous in that it is not clear whether the *Kingston* was lost at the same time as the *Favorite* on 9th February, or at some time earlier during the duration of the gale, which the "Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper" reported as "a period of six or eight hours".

"There is also on shore, on the Blakeney beach, the Kingston schooner, of Plymouth, from Hartlepool to Plymouth, with coals; crew saved; vessel will become a wreck."

"Another vessel was lost in the same place, the schooner, Kingston, from Hartlepool for Plymouth."

The suggestion is that the *Kingston* had already gone aground, with its crew safely recovered, when the *Favorite* too was wrecked, supported perhaps by the absence of any reference to the rescue of the *Kingston's* crew at the same time.

The sequence of events, in particular of the two fishermen's boats being launched, is also not entirely clear but the implication is that one (unnamed) boat put off from Blakeney, followed by the second, larger boat, *Sailor's Friend*. Newspapers report that the crew of the stranded *Favorite* was rescued by a second party of fishermen who put off from Blakeney. The reference to the witness on the second boat seeing the capsizing of the other implies that the *Sailor's Friend* was indeed following the first boat.

However, John Leslie's account contains four references suggesting that there were actually three boats which set off from Blakeney, of which one was the boat that capsized.

He described that, when the *Favorite* struck and seemed about to break up, the crew had themselves "got out two boats", but it seems clear that events overtook the crew and they were unable to launch them.

Despite the crew's efforts to move their ship or get themselves off it, the *Favorite* had stuck fast and "by this time a large boat came alongside" and later "a second large boat now came alongside", both of which "were not Institution Life-Boats". He referred too to the crew being taken off the *Favorite* in two boats.

According to "The Norwich Mercury", of the two boats which put off from Blakeney, "The larger boat went to the rescue" - presumably to try to save the men in the overturned fishermen's boat, not direct to the *Favorite* - but could only recover and bring ashore the bodies of three men. It is unclear whether, in John Leslie's reference, the "large boat which came alongside" was the *Sailor's Friend* which, after recovering the three bodies, then went back to the *Favorite* to take off some of her crew.

In a seemingly contradictory reference, John Leslie continued, "As we proceeded shorewards we passed a boat, similar to the **one** we were being taken ashore in, "bottom up ... it had left along with the **two boats** we were in". The phrase "similar to the one" was perhaps a mis-transcription of his original text and should have read "similar to the ones".

Also, in his reference to the rats leaving the *Favorite*, John Leslie remarked, "they could as easily have made for the **boats**", suggesting again that two boats took off the *Favorite's* crew.

In another reference, John Leslie wrote that when the fate of the first rescue boat was known "it was indeed a sad scene, to think that we all were saved, and fully **a third of their men** had perished". It is known that the ship which capsized was crewed by eight men from Blakeney and that the number of men who rescued the *Favorite's* crew totalled sixteen.

Further, not only did the number of rescuers total sixteen men, so did too did the crew of the *Favorite*. If, after the first rescue boat capsized, there had been only one other rescue boat, albeit a "large boat" as described, it would have had to accommodate thirty-two men in total.

By implication, the sixteen rescuers were crewing two boats and John Leslie's description of two boats coming out to the *Favorite* was accurate. This would also support the conclusion that, with one rescue boat capsized, an additional boat went out with or after the *Sailor's Friend* to take off the crew of the *Favorite*. This adds significant new information to what is known about the circumstances of the rescue from the ship.

The Blakeney men known to have lost their lives were brothers John, Samuel and Thomas Johnson, John Easter, Jacob Gravelin, Michael Massingham, John Neal, and William Johnson Warnes.

Newspaper reports vary in that some say that nine men lost their lives, others say eight. It would be unusual that, in a small, mainly seafaring community, it would not have been realised that one man did not return from the rescue attempt, even if his body were not found.

The most likely explanation for a discrepancy in the number of deaths is that, in the reporting regionally and nationally of the rapidly unfolding events, early, initial accounts may have been uncertain and thus gave rise to inaccuracy or misunderstanding about the number of men who were drowned.

The 1861 Census - taken on 7th April, almost two months after the disaster - records a number of Widows and/or specifically Fishermen's Widows in Blakeney. These surnames have been compared with burial records of men/Fishermen in the period February to December 1861 and no matches were found, confirming that the number of lives claimed by the disaster was correctly reported as eight.

The disaster at Blakeney was widely reported in national and regional newspapers. It appears that it took days for the weather to abate; four days after the storm had reached its height, the "Saunders's News-Letter" carried a report on Wednesday 13th February that at Blakeney, "It is now blowing a heavy gale from the east, with a tremendous sea on this coast".

THE LIVES LOST

While fishermen and mariners of Blakeney must have been inured to the hazards and unpredictability of a life at sea and the fatalities that might occur, the loss of life on this scale must have been deeply felt in such a closely-knit community, where members of large and longstanding families were related to each other. Of the eight men who lost their lives, three - John, Samuel and Thomas Johnson - were brothers. A fourth man, William Johnson Warnes, was the brothers' cousin.

The Parish records for Blakeney show the burials of some of the men who perished.

BURIALS in the Parish of <i>Blakeney</i> in the County of <i>Norfolk</i> ... in the Year <i>1861</i>				
Name.	Abode.	When buried.	Age.	By whom the Ceremony was performed.
<i>John Johnson</i> No. 121	<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>Feb: 13</i> <i>1861</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>R. H. Tollard</i> <i>Rector</i>
<i>Thomas Johnson</i> No. 122	<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>Feb: 13</i> <i>1861</i>	<i>52</i>	<i>Everett Bishop</i> <i>Curate</i>
<i>Johnson</i> <i>William Warnes</i> No. 123	<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>Feb: 15th</i> <i>1861</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>Everett Bishop</i> <i>Curate</i>

Blakeney Parish – Record of Burials

The three men whose bodies were recovered immediately from the capsized boat were buried shortly after their deaths.

John Johnson, aged 60, and Thomas Johnson, aged 52, were buried on 13th February 1861. William Johnson Warnes, aged 44, was buried on 15th February 1861.

The later burial dates of four others – in February, April, May and November – reflect that it was some time before the men were recovered.

There is no burial record for Samuel Johnson, whose body must have been lost to the sea.

THE PUBLIC APPEAL

“The Norfolk News” of 16th February had referred to the hope that “the public will raise a fund for the benefit of the widows of the poor fellows, who, in attempting to save others, became themselves the victims”.

The Rector of Blakeney, the Reverend Richard Henry Tillard - who had officiated at the burials of some of the fishermen - wrote to local newspapers initiating such an appeal. His letter was published in “The Norfolk Chronicle”, “The Norfolk News” and “The Norwich Mercury” on 23rd February.

THE LATE GALE AND LOSS OF LIFE AT BLAKENEY

“Sir, - I beg to call your attention to the distress occasioned by the loss of life at Blakeney during the late gale. On the morning of Saturday, 9th February, a boat, with a crew of eight men, was proceeding to the assistance of the barque “Favorite”, of Banff, from Hartlepool, for Spain, which had been wrecked in the course of the night previous, about a mile to the westward of Blakeney harbour. The sea was running much stronger than they at all expected when they left Blakeney for the wreck, a distance of about four miles. In crossing the bar at the entrance of the harbour, the boat was capsized by a heavy sea, which, to use the words of one who witnessed the scene from another boat, “caught her on the quarter, and hove her completely end over end”. Three of the poor fellows were picked up after about twenty minutes, but too late to save life even in a single instance. The remainder, it is supposed, sank under the boat.

The men thus lost were all married and most had families, though not large ones. It is on behalf of the widows and families that I desire to ask help through the medium of your columns. All but one of the widows are left penniless, and one of the children has been a helpless cripple for many years. The late severe winter, following on an unprecedentedly bad oyster fishing season, they have long since exhausted all their hard earned gains.

We are doing all we can to give assistance, but our power to help is much diminished by the number of somewhat similar cases amongst us.

Out of a population of about 1,100, there are between 40 and 50 widows, nearly half owe their bereavement to some casualty connected with the sea. We do not desire to shift the whole burden from our own shoulders to those of others, but we ask for help to give relief to those who need more than we can give ourselves – a help which we trust will be given both for the sake of our own poor sufferers, and also that the sailors in our various ports may be assured that when they risk their lives to save the lives and property of others, their widows and families will not be left in destitution and uncared for.

Subscriptions will be thankfully received, either sent to myself direct, or paid to the “Blakeney Subscription” at Messrs. Gurneys’ banks at Norwich and Fakenham.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

R.H. TILLARD, Rector of Blakeney,
Blakeney Rectory, Holt
Feb 19th 1861”

The Norfolk News – 23rd February 1861

Newspaper reports show that the Reverend Tillard wrote regularly, initially to thank the Editors for publishing his original letter on behalf of the fund, and subsequently to give updates about the contributions received for what became known as the “Fund for the Relief of the Widows and Children of the Blakeney Fishermen drowned 9th February 1861”.

The first of these updates advised readers that the fund stood at £293. 9s. 4d. and, on 27th March, the Rector’s account reported on additional donations received, bringing the fund to £592. 3s. 1d.

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE.

The Blakeney Subscription. We beg to call attention to the fund now being raised for the relief of the widows and children of the Blakeney fishermen, who met with a watery grave on the 9th February. This is an object that cannot but enlist the sympathies of a benevolent public. The appeal made by the respected rector has already been kindly responded to, but the amount at present promised is lamentably inadequate. The peculiar claim of this case arises from the poor men having been lost in the very act of trying to save their fellow-creatures, and we are sure that an appeal will not, under such circumstances, be made in vain.

“The Norfolk News” of Saturday 30th March 1861 reported that the amount promised was “lamentably inadequate” and appealed for more people to make donations.

The total increased gradually and at the beginning of April the newspaper reported that the fund had now reached £647. 18s. 1d.

The Reverend Tillard wrote on 25th April that £673.0s.7d. – what appears to have been the final total - had been received.

The Norfolk News – 30th March 1861

“The Norwich Mercury” of Saturday 27th April reported, that in addition to the amount raised by public donation, the Board of Trade had also made a £95 grant to the Fund.

It is gratifying to state that, besides the sum raised by subscription for the widows of the Blakeney fishermen, the Board of Trade has granted the sum of £95, to be distributed amongst them, in the proportion of £10 to each widow, and £3 to each young child.

“It is gratifying to state that, besides the sum raised by subscription for the widows of the Blakeney fishermen, the Board of Trade has granted the sum of £95, to be distributed amongst them, in the proportion of £10 to each widow, and £3 to each young child.”

The Norwich Mercury – 27th April 1861

THE MEN WHO WERE LOST

JOHN JOHNSON

John Johnson was the oldest of the three Johnson brothers who lost their lives in the disaster of 1861. He was born in Blakeney on 13th October 1800 and baptised the next day, the son of John and Anne (née Jordan) Johnson, who were married on 15th October 1795; his parents and his grandparents were all born in Blakeney and lived there until their deaths.

John Johnson had two sisters, Martha, born on 1st and baptised on 6th May 1798, and Mary, born on 29th and baptised on 31st July 1801, and four brothers, Joshua born on 15th and baptised on 18th March 1805, William born on 29th November and baptised on 1st December 1806, Thomas born on 8th and baptised on 9th November 1808, and Samuel baptised on 14th July 1811.

John married Margaret Lewis (born circa 1801) on 28th November 1823; a daughter, Ann Constance, the couple's only child, was born in July 1830.

Like his parents and grandparents, John Johnson lived in Blakeney all his life; the 1851 Census shows him and his family living at High Street West.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
John Johnson	Head	Married	49	Pilot	Norfolk, Blakeney
Margaret Johnson	Wife	Married	51	Pilot's Wife	Norfolk, Hindolveston
Ann Johnson	Daughter	Unmarried	22		Norfolk, Blakeney

1851 Census

John Johnson was buried on 13th February 1861, the same day as his brother Thomas. The inscription on his gravestone reads:



IN
MEMORY OF
JOHN JOHNSON

18 YEARS PILOT OF THIS PORT WHO
WAS DROWNED WITH SEVEN OTHERS WHILE
GOING TO THE RESCUE OF THE CREW
OF A SHIP WRECKED OFF THE WEST SAND
FEBRUARY 9TH 1861 AGED 59 YEARS

ALSO MARGARET HIS WIFE
WHO DIED FEBRUARY 3RD 1871
AGED 70 YEARS

Further lettering which follows this inscription is unreadable.

In 1861, the Census records Margaret Johnson, 62, described as a Pilot's Widow, living at Fitt's Court, Blakeney together with her unmarried 32 year old daughter Ann.

Described on the Census as "A Cripple from Rheumatism", Ann was the child described in the Reverend Tillett's letter as the "helpless cripple for many years".

John Johnson's gravestone also remembers his wife, Margaret, who died on February 3rd 1871, aged 70, almost ten years to the day after her husband's death.

Ann Constance Johnson was buried at Blakeney on 9th March 1884, aged 55.

THOMAS JOHNSON

Thomas Johnson, brother of John and Samuel, was born on 8th November and baptised at Blakeney on 9th November 1808.

MARRIAGES solemnized in the Parish of _____	
in the County of _____ in the Year 1829	
<i>Thomas Johnson</i>	of <i>this</i> Parish
<i>single man</i>	
and <i>Frances Belinda Bensley</i>	of <i>this</i> Parish
<i>single woman</i>	
were married in this <i>Parish</i>	by <i>Thomas</i> with Consent of
	this <i>third</i> Day of
<i>November</i>	in the Year One thousand eight hundred and <i>twenty nine</i>
By me <i>Jos. Colleside Rector</i>	
This Marriage was solemnized between us	<i>Thomas Johnson</i>
	<i>Frances Belinda Bensley</i>
In the Presence of	<i>Samuel Johnson</i>
	<i>John J. Marshall</i>
	<i>Joshua Lee</i>
No. 127.	

Thomas married on 3rd November 1829 Frances Belinda Bensley, Spinster, who was born in Hindringham; his brother Samuel was one of the Witnesses.

The 1841 Census shows Thomas and Belinda, both 30, and a son, Joshua, 10, living on Mariners Hill, Blakeney. Ten years later, Thomas, 42, and Belinda, 41, were living in the same place, referred to as Sailors Hill.

Thomas Johnson was buried on 13th February 1861, the same day as his brother John.

The 1861 Census reflects Belinda Johnson's reduced circumstances following the death of her husband just two months earlier. The loss of his earnings must have hit very hard for Belinda Johnson, now 51, was described as a Pauper. She was living alone in Johnson's Loke but the Census shows a visitor, Lydia Wordingham, 15, daughter of John Wordingham, a labourer of Blakeney.

Three years after the loss of her husband, Frances Johnson was buried at Blakeney on 14th January 1864, aged 55.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Samuel Johnson, baptised on 14th July 1811 at Blakeney, was the younger brother of John and Thomas Johnson. He married Pleasance Robinson, also of Blakeney, on 7th December 1833.

The couple did not move away from their home village and the 1841 Census shows Samuel, 28, a Mariner, his wife Pleasance, 26, and daughters Martha, 5, and Ann, 1, and gives their address as The Quay.

By 1851, Samuel Johnson's family had increased in size and was living in Church Green, with his wife's mother.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Pleasance Robinson	Head	Widowed	78	Pauper	Norfolk, Blakeney
Samuel Johnson	Son-in-law	Married	39	Mariner	Norfolk, Blakeney
Pleasance Johnson	Wife	Married	37	Mariner's Wife	Norfolk, Blakeney
Martha Johnson	Daughter	Unmarried	14	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
Ann Johnson	Daughter	Unmarried	11	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
John Johnson	Son	Unmarried	9	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
Samuel Johnson	Son	Unmarried	6	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
Julia Johnson	Daughter	Unmarried	3	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney

1851 Census

Samuel Johnson was one of the three brothers who lost their lives but no record has been found of his burial either in early 1861 or in the months following; the assumption is that his body was lost to the sea.

Shortly after her husband's death, Pleasance Johnson, described as a Fisherman's Widow, was living in the High Street in 1861, with a young son Charles, aged 4 (referred to in later records as Charles Joshua).

The Censuses for 1871 and 1881 both show Pleasance Johnson still in the High Street and living only with a granddaughter, Pleasance Fox (age given as 7 in 1871, 11 in 1881). Described now as a Laundress, Pleasance Johnson had evidently taken in washing to support herself financially.

Like his father and uncles, Samuel Johnson's youngest son Charles went to sea; the 1871 Census shows – for the Royal Dock, Grimsby - that Charles, 14, was an Ordinary Seaman on the *Blue Jacket*, a Blakeney vessel, together with three other men from the North Norfolk coast: William Grout, the Master, from Salthouse; Richard Holliday, the Mate, and John Waller, Able Seaman, both from Blakeney.

LIST of OFFICERS, CREW, and OTHERS on BOARD of the SHIP or VESSEL named the <i>Blue Jacket</i> on the NIGHT of SUNDAY, APRIL 2nd, 1871.						
NAME and SURNAME	CONDITION	AGE [Last Birthday] of		RANK or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	If (a) Deaf- Dumb (b) Blind (c) Insane or Mute (d) Lunatic
		Male	Female			
Write, under the Name of the Master, the Names of the Officers and Crew, and then the Names of Passengers and of all other Persons	Write "Married" or "Unmarried" or "Widow" or "Widower" against the Names of all Persons except Young Children.			State here the rank of the Officers, and the rating of the Men and Boys of the Crew. The rank or occupation of Passengers and of all other Persons should be stated as fully and clearly as possible.	Deposite the Names of those born in England, with the County and Town, or Parish. If born in Scotland, Ireland, the British Colonies, or the East Indies, state the Country or Colony. If born in Foreign parts, write the particular Part or Country; and if also a British Subject, add "British Subject," if "Naturalized British Subject," as the case may be.	Write the respective Indentures against the name of the afflicted Person; and if so from Illness, add "from Illness."
<i>William Grout</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>27</i>		<i>Master</i>	<i>Salthouse, Norfolk</i>	
<i>Richard Holliday</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>26</i>		<i>Mate</i>	<i>Blakeney, Norfolk</i>	
<i>John Waller</i>	<i>unmarried</i>	<i>21</i>		<i>A.B. Seaman</i>	<i>Blakeney, Norfolk</i>	
<i>Charles Johnson</i>	<i>unmarried</i>	<i>14</i>		<i>A. Seaman</i>	<i>Blakeney, Norfolk</i>	

1871 Census

The next Census shows that by 1881 Charles Johnson, now 25 and married to Jane (née Cook, of Dover), was serving as an Able Seaman on the Dover registered 211 ton brigantine *Conrade* – official number 50922 – docked at Portsea Island.

In 1891, Charles Joshua Johnson was now a Master and (either still, or again) serving on the *Conrade* which was docked on the River Wear, Hylton, Sunderland.

The 1901 Census shows Charles as Master of the Dover registered *Perilla* – official number 46815 - docked at the Wellington Dock, Dover. Other records confirm that Charles Johnson lived in Dover from, presumably, the time of his marriage until his death in 1932.

Pleasance Johnson remained in Blakeney and the Register of Electors for 1889 gives her "Place of Abode" as a house in the High Street. The 1891 Census shows her, a Pauper, now 77, and apparently occupying the same house, which the 1891 Census described as having four rooms, and living alone.

At the time of the 1901 Census, Pleasance Johnson was still living alone, at 49 High Street, in a dwelling comprising three rooms.

Pleasance Johnson continued to live in the High Street, apparently until her death in 1909, aged 95. She had been married for twenty-eight years and widowed for forty-nine.

WILLIAM JOHNSON WARNES

William Johnson Warnes was baptised in Blakeney on 19th February 1815, the son of Robert, a Sailor, and Martha (née Johnson) Warnes who were married on 12th January 1808 at Blakeney.

William married on 20th July 1840 at Saxlingham, Jemima Coe, daughter of James and Rose (née Nichols) Coe; her father was a Farmer. William, said to be of "Full Age" (at least 21), made his mark on the marriage register but Jemima, a Minor (she was born in 1820), signed her name.

The 1841 Census shows William, 25, and Jemima, 20, living in the High Street; in 1851, William 34, and Jemima 30, whose birthplace was given as Field Dalling, were in High Street West.

The 1860 Register of Electors shows that William Johnson Warnes was the owner of freehold cottages and land in Blakeney, with two tenants G. Baldwin and R. Shorten.

Ownership evidently passed to William Warnes' widow for by the 1861 Census, two months after her husband was lost at sea, Jemima Warnes was still living in the High Street and described as a "Cottage Owner". Living with her was an unmarried niece, Susanna Warnes, 22, a Seamstress, the daughter of Robert, a Sailor, and Elizabeth (née Crane) Warnes and the sister of Seaman Warnes. Susanna and Seaman Warnes were both baptised on 24th November 1839.

Probate records show that William Johnson Warnes' Will was proved in Norwich on 10th August 1861 and Probate granted to Jemima, the sole Executrix.

Jemima Warnes does not appear as such in the Censuses for Blakeney for 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 but it appears that she was indeed still living there.

The 1871 Census records in the High Street a Jemima Porter - matching Jemima Warne's age, 49, and her birthplace, Field Dalling - living with John Porter, 33, a Fisherman, also born in Field Dalling, the son of Robert and Ann (née Coe).

Each of the three following Censuses - for 1881, 1891 and 1901- shows the same couple still living in the High Street and records Jemima Porter as John Porter's wife, and they were said to be "Married".

Either the Census Enumerator made an assumption or error, or the couple gave incorrect information, for Jemima was actually living with her nephew. Ann Coe (born in 1812) and Jemima Coe (born in 1820) were sisters. Ann married Robert Porter on 9th April 1833 and a son, John Porter, was born in 1838. If the relationship was as it appears, marriage - between a man and his mother's sister - was a forbidden one, according to the "Table of Kindred and Affinity" relating to those permitted to marry in the Church of England.

Jemima Warnes died on 28th September 1906; she was forty years old when her husband lost his life and was widowed for forty-five years.

Her Estate was considerable, with Effects of £1,586 10s 11d., and Probate was granted to Charles Johnson Temple-Lynes, "Gentleman". That Probate records give her name as Jemima Warnes and describe her as a Widow seems to bear out that she did not marry after her husband, William Warnes' death.

The 1911 Census interestingly shows that John Porter, 72, was living in the High Street with Emma Porter (née Ives, formerly Twiddy), 57, and her son, daughter and granddaughter. John Porter completed the Census form as "Head of the Family" and stated that the "completed years the present marriage has lasted" was four, so apparently very shortly after Jemima Warnes' death. However, no record has been found of a marriage between John Porter and Emma Twiddy.

John Porter died in 1921, aged 83.

JOHN NEAL

John Neal was born on 20th October and baptised on 21st October 1812 in Thornage, the son of James and Lydia (née Sturley) Neal.

John's mother died in June 1821 and he apparently - as shown on his eldest son's Baptismal record - adopted her maiden name Sturley as his middle name.

The spellings vary in parish and other records, appearing as Sturley, Stirley, Neal and Neale. Similarly, the surname Pentin is written variously as Pentin, Penten, Penton and Pentney.

John Neal married on 19th June 1835, by Banns, Frances Bloom Beavis; baptised on 11th June 1815, Frances was the daughter of George, a Sailor, and Mary (née Pentin) Beavis. One of the Witnesses to the marriage was another Blakeney fisherman, Murrell Baines, who was married to Frances Beavis's older sister, Susan.

The couple had two sons: John James was baptised on 25th December 1836; Robert Brereton - named for his maternal grandmother Mary Sturley (née Brereton) - was baptised on 21st October 1838. Baptismal records for both children give their father John Neal's occupation as a Fisherman.

John and Frances's marriage lasted just under five years. Frances Bloom Neal was both born and married in the month of June and it was sadly in that month too that she died; she was buried at Blakeney on 14th June 1840, aged 24.

Almost a year after his wife's death, the 1841 Census shows John Neal, 30, a Fisherman, living in Westgate Street (formerly Pig Street), apparently lodging - along with another Mariner - with a 75 year old Roadman, Matt Miller and his wife.

John Neal had a very young family to support and the same 1841 Census shows his two young sons, John, 5, and Robert, 2, with their grandparents George and Mary Beavis who were also living in Westgate Street, just four houses along from John Neal.

Later in the same year, on 19th October 1841, John Neal married again to Jane Margaret White, a Spinster, of Blakeney. Jane was the daughter of John White, also a Sailor. Both John and Jane were "of Full Age" (over 21) and both signed their names on the Register.

A son, James Custance Neal was baptised at Blakeney on 2nd January 1844 but died in infancy and was buried on 28th March 1845. The 1841 Census shows that, before her marriage, Jane White was a Servant for Ann Custance, 68, a widow of independent means living in the High Street, Blakeney; she died in 1845.

By 1851, John and Jane Neal had made their home in High Street West where they were living with John's two sons by his first marriage and, by then, their own two children.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
John Neal	Head	Married	37	Fisherman	Norfolk, Thornage
Jane M. Neal	Wife	Married	38	Fisherman's Wife	Norfolk, Blakeney
John Sturley Neal	Son	Unmarried	14	Fisherman's Assistant	Norfolk, Blakeney
Robert B. Neal	Son	Unmarried	12	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
Ann Sophia Neal	Daughter		5	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
William James Neal	Son		3	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney

1851 Census

John Neal's elder son John had evidently adopted - as his father had done - the middle name Sturley (subsequently spelling it Stirley), rather than James as shown on the Register of his Baptism.

Less than a year after the Census was taken, Blakeney parish records show that William James Neal, aged 4, was buried on 1st January 1852.

John Neal - whose age the Burial record gives as 49 - was buried on 25th February 1861; the date, almost a fortnight after burials of John and Thomas Johnson and William Warnes, suggests that he was the fourth man to be recovered from the sea and that his body was not immediately found.

The 1861 Census shows Jane Margaret Neal, 50, a "Fisherman's Widow", at Custance Court, High Street West with her daughter, Ann Sophia, 15, whose occupation was described as "Keeps an Infants School".

John Neal (recorded as and signed by John Stirley Neal on the Marriage Certificate), a Sailor, was married on 25th August 1863 to Sarah Daws, also of Blakeney; his sister Ann Sophia was one of the Witnesses.

Jane Neal did not live for long after her husband's death; parish records show that she was buried at Blakeney on 10th August 1865, aged 56.

Four years after her mother's death, Ann Sophia Neal married on 27th December 1868 William Dew, a Sailor. He was born at Salthouse in January 1845, the son of George, also a Mariner, and Eliza (née Spence).

DEW-NEAL-On the 27th ult., at the Church of the Holy Trinity, Heigham, by the Rev. G. Sharley, Mr. William Dew, of Blakeney, to Ann Sophia, only daughter of the late Mr. John Neal.

The Norfolk News - 2nd January 1869

Like other mariners from Blakeney, William Dew moved his family to Westoe, South Shields where the 1871 Census shows William and Sophia with a daughter, Minnie, aged 1. William and Sophia Dew were still in Westoe in 1881, now with two more daughters Jane, 9, and Ann, 4. Ten years later, William was a Lighterman of Barges and in 1911, a Master Mariner. He died in 1913, his wife Ann Sophia in 1919.

Also in Westoe in 1871 were Ann Sophia's brother and his wife, John and Sarah Neal, now with daughters Florence, 3, and Sarah, 3 months. John Neal is assumed to have been at sea in 1881, when the Census shows his wife and their three daughters - Florence, 12, Sarah, 10, and Edith 2 months - living in Hackney.

Sarah Neale	wife	mar	43	mariner's wife	Widestone, Norfolk
Florence M.	Daughter		13	Scholar	St. Shields, Durham
Sarah J.			10		
Edith			2 ^{mo}		Hackney

1881 Census

No trace has been found of Robert Neale after the 1851 Census entry, nor of John Neale after the 1871 Census entry, but both brothers went to live in New Zealand, apparently towards the end of the nineteenth century, where they adopted the spelling Neale as their surname.



Captain John Stirley Neale

John Neale settled in New Zealand following his own encounter with maritime disaster. In August 1884 he was the Chief Officer aboard the *Lastingham*, a 1,143 ton, 1877 London registered sailing ship on passage from London for Wellington when, about fifty miles from Wellington, she was driven onto the rocks at Jackson Head in Cook Strait in a heavy storm and became a total wreck.

The Captain, his wife, five passengers and eleven crew members lost their lives. After being ashore for three days, Captain Neale and the other survivors were taken to Wellington by a ketch on 5th September.

John Neale was awarded his Master's Certificate on 31st December 1884 and was appointed shortly afterwards Chief Officer of the government steamer *Hinemoa*, later becoming Master of the vessel. Four years later, circa 1888, Captain Neale took command of the *Stella*. He was appointed Harbourmaster at Onehunga in 1898.

Sarah Neale died on 12th March 1907, predeceasing her husband. John Neale retired as Harbourmaster in 1917 and died the following year, on 8th July 1918. John's brother, Robert Brereton Neale died on 17th May 1919. Both brothers died at Onehunga and both were buried at Waikaraka Cemetery, Auckland. The memorial to the three family members gives John's name as John Stirley Neale.

JOHN EASTER

John Easter was baptised at Cley on 17th April 1822, the son of John and Johanna (née Nurse) Easter, both from Weybourne. John Easter's father was a Publican/Innkeeper and was, for twenty-four years, the Licensee of the King's Arms in Westgate Street.

John married on 27th August 1839 at Blakeney Mary Ann Jordan, daughter of Simon Jordan, a Sailor of Blakeney. Both John and Mary Ann were described as "Minors", under the age of 21. A daughter, Mary Ann was born in 1840 and baptised at Blakeney on 9th February. Just over a year later, the 1841 Census shows John, his wife and daughter living in the High Street.

In 1851, John, 29, a Fisherman, his wife Mary Ann, 30, and their daughter also Mary Ann, 11, a Scholar, were living in Pig (now Westgate) Street, two houses down from his parents. In April 1861, shortly after her husband's death, the Census shows, Mary Ann, 40, and her daughter, now 21, were living at Bullock's Court, Blakeney and were both described as Dressmakers.

With the passage of time, John Easter's wife and daughter must have assumed that the sea had claimed his body but, nine months after he and his colleagues set off in the two fishermen's boats, John Easter was recovered and Mary Ann had the harrowing task of identifying him.

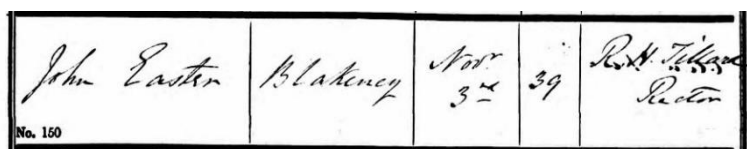
BLAKENEY.
THE LATE JOHN EASTER.—It will be remembered that about nine months ago we recorded a melancholy catastrophe at Blakeney, in which eight gallant fellows, including John Easter, lost their lives in attempting to save a perishing crew. Seven of the bodies were picked up and buried; the eighth, that of John Easter, was not found till Saturday last, just thirty-six weeks from the time of the sad event, when it was washed ashore at Weybourne. Two men fell in with the body, and watched it till it was thrown upon Weybourne cliff, when they ran into the sea and caught hold of it. None of the clothing remained upon the corpse except the boots and stockings, and it was by the boots that the wife of the unfortunate man identified the body as that of her late husband. The funeral took place at Blakeney on Sunday.

The Norfolk News - 9th November 1861

BLAKENEY

THE LATE JOHN EASTER — It will be remembered that about nine months ago we recorded a melancholy catastrophe at Blakeney, in which eight gallant fellows, including John Easter, lost their lives in attempting to save a perishing crew. Seven of the bodies were picked up and buried; the eighth, that of John Easter, was not found till Saturday last, just thirty-six weeks from the time of the sad event, when it was washed ashore at Weybourne. Two men fell in with the body, and watched it till it was thrown upon Weybourne cliff, when they ran into the sea and caught hold of it. None of the clothing remained upon the corpse except the boots and stockings, and it was by the boots that the wife of the unfortunate man identified the body as that of her late husband. The funeral took place at Blakeney on Sunday.

Blakeney Parish records show that John Easter, aged 39, was buried on 3rd November 1861.



His headstone, shown on the front cover, reads:

IN MEMORY OF
JOHN EASTER WHO WAS DROWNED FEBRUARY
THE 9TH 1861
WAS WASHED ON SHORE NOVEMBER THE 2ND
1861
AGED 37 YEARS

I WITH SEVEN OTHERS WENT
OUR FELLOW MEN TO SAVE
A HEAVY SEA UPSET OUR BOAT
WE MET A WATERY GRAVE.

The loss of his son in 1861 was the second tragic event for John Easter for his wife Johanna had died the previous year, in July 1860, aged 72.

Mary Ann Easter's daughter married on 30th June 1863 John William Spence Dew, 23, a Mariner of Blakeney. John Dew was baptised on 28th July 1839 at Salthouse, the son of George, also a Sailor, and Elizabeth (née Whitby); John Dew's grandfather, Edmund, was a Pilot.

Like other seafaring families who, with the decline in importance of Blakeney as a port, had migrated to the North of England to seek opportunities, John, now a Master Mariner, and Mary Ann Dew moved to South Shields. The 1871 Census shows that Mary Ann's widowed mother, now aged 50 and still a Dressmaker, was living in Dock Street East with her daughter and son-in-law and their two young children, Joanna, 2, and George, 6 months.

Mary Ann and John Dew's marriage was sadly short; John Dew died at sea on 27th April 1874, after falling overboard from his ship, the *SS Great Yarmouth* during stormy weather while on voyage from Riga for Lowestoft.

At the time of the 1881 Census, Mary Ann Easter was still living in Westoe, South Shields with her widowed daughter and her three young grandchildren, Joanna, 12, Eliza, 8, and George, 7, who was born two months after his father's death. Both women were Dressmakers. Boarding with the family was Josiah Spooner, from Blakeney, a 29 year old married Mariner. Josiah was the son of John Spooner, a Master Mariner; he had married in the same year Eleanor Augusta Long, daughter of James Long, a Fisherman.

Twenty-five years after her husband lost his life in the Blakeney disaster, Mary Ann Easter died in South Shields in 1886, aged 65.

JACOB GRAVELIN

Jacob Gravelin (spelled Graveling in some newspaper reports), 21, a Labourer, son of James also a Labourer, married Mary Anne Suckling Blackwood, 20, at Blakeney on 24th March 1856; both were living in Blakeney at the time of their marriage.

Mary Anne was baptised in Wiveton on 10th January 1836, the (illegitimate) daughter - Baptismal records show - of Elizabeth Blackwood, a Servant.

The entry on the couple's Marriage Certificate - which Mary Anne signed but Jacob made his mark - shows that her father was a Benjamin Suckling, whose occupation was left blank. Two people with the name Benjamin Suckling have been found in North Norfolk: one the Reverend Benjamin Suckling, of Edgefield, Holt, was the Rector of Matlaske and Plumstead (1763-1837), the other his youngest son, Benjamin William Suckling (1814-1881).

The 1861 Census shows Mary Ann Gravelin, 25, a "Sailor's Widow", living at Greencroft in Blakeney with an 8-month old daughter, Mary.

It was evidently some time after the loss of the Blakeney fishermen that Jacob Gravelin's body was recovered for parish records show his burial, aged 27, at Blakeney on 30th April 1861.

Jacob Gravelin	Blakeney	April 30th 1861	27	Evrett Bishop Curate.
No. 131				

Baptismal records for Blakeney poignantly show that Mary Gravelin, daughter of Jacob (Labourer, deceased) and Mary Ann Suckling Gravelin was baptised on 28th July 1861, almost exactly three months after her father's burial.

July 28th	Mary	Jacob & Mary Ann Suckling	Gravelin	Blakeney	Labourer (decd)	R. A. Tidwell Curate
No. 568.						

Ten years after her husband's death, the 1871 Census shows that Mary Ann Gravelin, 34, was a Laundress.

In 1881, Mary Ann, 42, whose occupation was then a Charwoman, was living at Temple Place with her 20 year old, unmarried daughter Mary, described as a "General Servant".

Mary Gravelin, 23, married at Blakeney on 9th February 1885, John Dawson, 23, a Sailor from Chatham.

The Register of Electors for 1889 gives Mary Ann Gravelin's "Place of Abode" still as Greencroft and the 1891 and 1901 Censuses show that she was living alone in Morston Road, Blakeney when she was described firstly as a Charwoman and subsequently as a Washerwoman.

Mary Ann Suckling Gravelin died in early 1909, aged 73.

MICHAEL MASSINGHAM

Michael Massingham was a Blakeney fisherman but he was born in London on 21st August 1803, the son of a Mariner. His father, John Gray Massingham, a Widower, married Ann Smith, a Spinster, on 29th November 1799 at St. George in the East, Tower Hamlets.

Michael Massingham married in 1839 Mary Ann Garrett, who was born in Langham on 20th April 1805, the daughter of James and Ann (née Johnson) Garrett.

At the time of the 1841 Census, the couple, both aged 30, were living in the High Street, when Michael's occupation was given as Mariner.

Still in Blakeney in 1851, the Census shows Michael Massingham, a 48 year old Fisherman, living in Smith's Yard with his wife, 46, and two children Catherine Withers, 8, and John Garrett Withers, 2, who were born in Blakeney. Also living with the family was Michael Massingham's mother, Ann, 88, described as a Pauper.

As was the case for Jacob Gravelin, it was evidently some time before Michael Massingham's body was recovered from the sea; he was buried at Blakeney on 14th May 1861, aged 57, three months after the attempted rescue which cost him his life.

In the same year, his widow Mary, 55, was living at Mitchell's Court; her daughter Catherine, 18, was a Dressmaker and her son John, 12, a Scholar. Mary was evidently doing what she could to support herself and her children financially; she was described as a Charwoman, probably cleaning in order to make a living, and she had also taken as a Lodger Robert Pane, 85, a widowed Waterman who was born in Salthouse.

Three years after her father's death, Michael's daughter Catherine Withers Massingham, 21, married on 24th March 1864 at Blakeney, James Pentney Jarvis, 22, a Sailor, son of John Yaxley and Elizabeth (née Beavis) Jarvis.

In one of the frequently occurring connections between families in Blakeney, Elizabeth Beavis was the younger sister of Susan Beavis who married Murrell Baines, another Blakeney fisherman, and older sister of Frances Bloom Beavis who married John Neal.

Still in Blakeney but now in the High Street in 1871, Mary Massingham, 66, a "Fisherman's Widow", was living with her unmarried son, John, 28, a Mariner.

The 1871 Census shows Catherine Withers Jarvis, 28, described as a Mariner's Wife and a Dressmaker living alone in the High Street. Her husband, James, 29, was serving with his uncle Henry Yaxley Jarvis, Able Seaman and Mate respectively, on the *Newcastle Packet* - official number 21204 - a 53 ton sailing vessel registered to Cley; the ship was at docked at Grimsby. This was the same ship that James Lee was Master of in 1881.

Mary Massingham continued to live in the High Street but by 1881 she was a "Pauper" and was living with her married daughter, Catherine Jarvis. Ten years later, Mary, now 87, was still living with her daughter, 48, and two nieces, Kate and Annie Parsons.

Catherine Jarvis was still living alone in the High Street in 1881. Ten years later, at the same house in the High Street, Catherine Jarvis, now 48, was living with her widowed mother Mary Massingham, 87, and two nieces, Kate and Annie Parsons.

Mary Massingham was buried on 9th January 1893 at Blakeney, aged 89. Mary and Michael Massingham had been married for twenty-two years when Michael was drowned and she was widowed for nearly thirty-three. The Census details reflect the hardships Mary had to contend with as a widow, probably with little income and relying on the support of her daughter during her later, long life.

The 1901 Census shows that Catherine Jarvis, 58, had been widowed between 1891 and 1901 and she was still living alone in the High Street and working as a Seamstress and Shirtmaker "On Her Own Account"; her situation was the same in 1911 but the Census adds that she was living in two rooms, not including a bathroom or scullery (if she even had them).

Catherine Jarvis died in 1938, aged 95.

THE RESCUERS

Neither national nor local newspapers reporting the loss of life at Blakeney made reference at the time to the names of the men who crewed the second boat – the *Sailor's Friend* - which went to the assistance of the *Favourite*.

The only reports found are from the "The Aberdeen Press and Journal" of Wednesday 17th April 1861 and "The Banffshire Journal" of 23rd April 1861, which evidently gave more prominence to the news of the rescue of a Banff registered ship.

REWARDS FOR SAVING LIFE AT SEA

"The undermentioned rewards for saving life at sea have recently been awarded by Her Majesty's Government and the Board of Trade.

To Murrell Baines, William Baines, Edward Baines, William Warner, William Digeman, William Jarvis, Thomas Loads, B. Jeary, James Lovey, William Pells, James Dew, P. Killwood, T. Bambridge, John Dow, John Waller, Fishermen and Beachmen, and to William Kemp, Chief Boatman, Coastguard, £1 each for their services in manning the boat *Sailor's Friend* and rescuing the Crew of the *Favourite*, of Banff, wrecked off Blakeney on the 9th February last.

Some of these names were inaccurate in their spelling. Parish and Census records show, for example, that William Digeman appears as Digman, P. Killwood was Kittwood,

The following short "biographies" set out to place these men in Blakeney and, from the Censuses, where in particular they were in 1851, the year preceding the Blakeney disaster, then in 1861 itself, and what happened to them and their families subsequently.

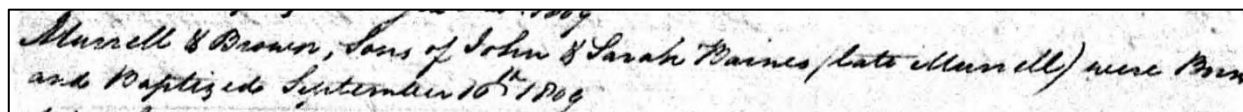
MURRELL, EDWARD AND WILLIAM BAINES

There were a number of Baines families in Blakeney, often with offspring carrying the same distinctive names repeated through different branches and different generations. This makes identification of the individuals difficult but the names Murrell, Edward and William all occur in one, same family and the assumption is that this was the family from which the three rescuers came.

It is not clear, however, whether it was Murrell Baines Senior or his son Murrell who went to the assistance of the crews of the two ships and to their fishermen colleagues. Murrell Baines Senior would have been about 50 and his sons Murrell 25, Edward Murrell 28, and William, 18 in 1861.

MURRELL BAINES – FATHER

Murrell (Senior) and his twin brother Brown Baines, sons of John and Sarah (née Murrell) Baines, were both born and baptised on 16th September 1809.



Murrell & Brown, sons of John & Sarah Baines (late Murrell) were born and baptised September 16th 1809

Baptismal Records, Blakeney

Murrell Baines married on 12th November 1828 Susan (Susanna) Beavis, daughter of George and Mary (née Penten) Beavis.

Susan, born in 1808, was the older sister of Frances Bloom Beavis, born in 1815, who married fellow Fisherman John Neal in 1835, when Murrell Baines was one of the Witnesses.

Murrell and Susan Baines went on to have a sizeable family. John was baptised at Blakeney on 2nd August 1829, his brother Edward Murrell on 22nd February 1835, and brother Murrell Beavis on 25th August 1835.

James and another son Francis Tuck were both baptised on 25th December 1835 but Francis did not survive and was buried on 30th January 1838 aged 17 weeks. Zaccheus was born in 1839.

The 1841 Census shows the Baines family living in the High Street.

Name	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Whether Born in same County
Murrell Baines	30	Fisherman	Yes
Susan Baines	30		Yes
John Baines	12		Yes
Edward Baines	8		Yes
James Baines	6		Yes
Zaccheus Baines	1		Yes

1841 Census

Between 1841 and 1850, there were births and deaths. William and a second son named Francis were baptised on 3rd September 1843; Francis was buried on 4th October, aged 10 weeks. A daughter, Susanna, was baptised on 4th April 1847. Son James was buried on 30th April 1850, aged 12.

The 1851 Census shows the family at Load's Court.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Murrell Baines	Head	Married	40	Fisherman	Norfolk, Blakeney
Susan Baines	Wife	Married	42	Fisherman's Wife	Norfolk, Blakeney
John Baines	Son	Unmarried	22	Mariner	Norfolk, Blakeney
Edward Baines	Son	Unmarried	17	Fisherman	Norfolk, Blakeney
Murrell Baines	Son	Unmarried	15	Fisherman's Assistant	Norfolk, Blakeney
Zaccheus Baines	Son		11	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
William Baines	Son		8	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
Susan Baines	Daughter		5	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
Frederick Baines	Son		2	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
James Baines	Son		3 ^m		Norfolk, Blakeney

1851 Census

Frederick Warnes Baines and James Beavis Baines were both baptised on 8th June 1851.

By 1861, there were fewer members of the Baines family living at Load's Court: Murrell, 52, a Fisherman; Susan, 53; and their younger children, Zaccheus, 20, a Mariner; Susanna, 15; Frederick, 12; and James, 10.

Susan Baines was buried on 25th February 1870 at Blakeney, aged 61. In the years following his wife's death, the Censuses show that Murrell Baines, 60, a Fisherman, was living with his unmarried son James Beavis, 20, a Carpenter's Apprentice in 1871.

Murrell Baines has not been found in the 1881 Census but in 1891, still a Fisherman and still living in the High Street, he was living alone, now aged 81.

Murrell Baines died in 1900, aged 91, and was buried at Blakeney on 7th October.

MURRELL BEAVIS BAINES - SON

Murrell Beavis Baines was baptised on 25th August 1835. Aged 30, he married on 5th July 1866 Hannah Waller, 29, daughter of John Waller, a Fisherman.

Five years after their marriage, the 1871 Census shows Murrell, 36, described as a Mariner, and Hannah, 34, living in the High Street with Susanna Waller, 13, Hannah's niece, who was described as "Lame". The couple were living in the next house to Thomas Bambridge, another of the rescuers, and his wife, Martha.

In 1881, Murrell and Hannah Baines were living in a Yard off the High Street – adjacent to a house occupied by his now married brother James Beavis Baines, 30, a Carpenter, his wife and three young children all aged under 10.

No other record has been found of Murrell or of Hannah Baines.

EDWARD MURRELL BAINES

Edward Baines, a Sailor, married on 24th March 1854 Phoebe Digby of Weybourne; he was a “minor” (under 21 years), she of “full age”.

The 1861 Census shows Edward, 27, and Phoebe, 30 living in a loke off Load’s Court, with three children John, 10, Murrell, 3, and James, 1.

Ten years later, the couple were living in the High Street with their son John, 16, a Fisherman/Mariner, and daughter, Susannah, 8, a Scholar,

John was no longer at home in 1881, when the Census shows Edward and Phoebe still living in the High Street, with their daughter, Susan, 19, a Dressmaker and, ten years later, only Edward, 65, and Phoebe, 67, were still in the High Street.

The 1911 Census shows the couple, now 76 and 80; their marriage had lasted fifty-two years and there were ten children, of which only two were still alive.

Edward Murrell Baines died on 6th February 1923, Phoebe having predeceased him in 1918.

WILLIAM BAINES

William Baines was not living with his parents and family at the time of the 1861 Census, when he would have been about 18, but he has not been found elsewhere.

He married on 16th January 1866 at the Independent Chapel, Little Walsingham, Mary Ann Daplyn of Hindringham.

The 1871 Census shows William, 28, and Mary Baines, 30, with two daughters, Mary Ann, 4 and Mary Thirza, 3, lodging in the High Street with Thomas Spooner, 69, another Fisherman, and his wife, Mary, 70.

The couple were still lodging with Thomas, 84, and Mary Spooner, 85, in Load’s Yard, in 1881, now with another daughter, Florence Emily, 9 and a son, William, 3.

William and Mary appear to have been living independently by 1891, no longer lodgers, with only their son, William, living with them.

William Baines was admitted to the Thorpe Asylum on 20th November 1900 and died there on 13th June 1901, aged 59. He was buried at Blakeney on 18th June.

Mary Ann Baines, 60, and her son, William, 23, were still living in Blakeney in 1901. William married in 1903 Sarah Elizabeth Clamp; his mother died shortly after her son’s marriage, in 1904, aged 59.

Mary Ann Baines died on 13th June 1904, aged 59. A headstone in Blakeney churchyard commemorates both William and Mary Ann.

THOMAS BAMBRIDGE

Thomas Bambridge was born in Blakeney on 26th October 1802, the son of Edward, a shoemaker, and Charlotte (née Bridges) Bambridge.

He married at Blakeney on 17th December 1841, Martha Johnson of Blakeney, daughter of John Johnson, a Maltster.

The 1851 Census shows Thomas, 48, a Fisherman, his wife, Martha, 37, and three children, John, 6, Edward, 5, and Ann Elizabeth, 3, living in High Street West.

The family was still living in High Street West ten years later, now with - the 1861 Census shows - two more children, Martha, 8, and Joseph (Joseph Jordan), 7. Thomas was described as a Fisherman and Mariner; his eldest son, John, now 16, was also a Mariner.

The incidence of the names Johnson and Jordan suggest connections with families of the same names already referenced.

At the time of the 1871 Census, the household comprised only Thomas, 68, a Fisherman, Martha, 56, and Joseph, also a Fisherman.

Thomas, Martha and Joseph Bambridge were still living in the High Street in 1881 but their circumstances had changed; Thomas, now 78, presumably no longer going to sea, was described as a Pauper.

Thomas Bambridge was buried in Blakeney on 28th January 1883, aged 80.

Joseph Bambridge married Edith Alice White at Wighton on 16th November 1884, he was 30, she 21. The 1891 Census shows Joseph, 37, and Edith, 27, living in the High Street with their four children whose ages ranged from one month to 6 years, together with Joseph's widowed mother, now 77.

Martha Bambridge was buried in Blakeney on 12th January 1892, aged 77.

JAMES DEW

James Dew was born in Cockthorpe, Binham circa 1828, the son of John Dew, a Labourer, and Martha (née Coe) Dew who were married in Langham on 19th January 1822.

The 1851 Census shows James Dew, a 22 year old Mariner, lodging in High Street East with a family named Kennedy; the Head of the household was William Kennedy, a bricklayer. Two years later, on 14th October 1853, James Dew, described as a Sailor and aged 25, married Mary Kennedy, William Kennedy's daughter, who was born circa 1833.

At the time of the 1861 Census, James Dew was serving on the 92 ton sailing ship *Gipsy* – official number 2015 - with a crew comprising four men from Cley and one from Binham. The Wells registered *Gipsy* was wrecked a year later, on 23rd December 1862.

Mary Dew, 27, described as a Master Mariner's Wife, was at home in 1861 and living in Post Office Court with four young children Martha, 6, Mary Jane, 5, James William, 3, and Sarah Ann, 1.

By 1864, James Dew was Master of the *Ann* of Wells, a schooner of 84 tons - official number 583 - owned by R.C. Wells of Blakeney. The 1871 Census shows him as Master of the *Charlotte*, together with a crew of four, all from Blakeney: William Bowles, Mate; William Anthony, Able Seaman; Daniel Dix, Ordinary Seaman; and John Cook, Boy. There were two ships of this name in the same period: the 15 ton ship registered at Cley – official number 21227, and the 13 ton ship registered at Wells – official number 21229.

James Dew was buried at Blakeney on 31st July 1881, aged 53. At some time after her husband's death and by 1891, Mary Dew had evidently moved to Middlesbrough to live with her daughter, Mary Jane, who was married to Waldemar Sachse, a German shipping broker and commission agent, and their family. Ten years later, the 1901 Census shows Mary Dew still living with her daughter's family.

In 1911, the Sachse family, still with Mary Dew aged 77, were living very comfortably in Linthorpe, Middlesbrough in a house with eight rooms not including "scullery, landing, lobby, closet and bathroom". Mary Dew died in 1920, aged 86, almost forty years after she was widowed.

Two of James Dew's brothers, Thomas and David, both became - like him - Master Mariners and they both married daughters of Mariners.

Thomas Dew married on 23rd November 1848 at Blakeney, Susannah Coe, daughter of John Coe. Thomas Dew became Master of the *Tweedside* of Wells, a 254 ton brig – official number 24580, owned by James William Porrit of Cley. When he retired from the sea, Thomas Dew became the Harbour Master of Blakeney, a position he held until 1900 when he was 74 years old.

James's brother, David Dew, 26, married on 7th February 1861 at Blakeney, Eliza Ann Wisker, 20, daughter of Robert Wisker, a Master Mariner of Blakeney.

JOHN DEW

With no trace of a John Dow (as recorded in Lloyd's List and the Aberdeen Press and Journal) living in Blakeney, the man referred to is assumed to be John Dew.

The most likely "candidate" for the man who took part in the 1861 rescue, was John Dew, son of Edmund, a Seaman, and Jane (née Cozens) Dew, who was baptised on 30th October 1814 at Blakeney.

Edmund was born in Langham, Jane in Cromer; they were married at Cromer on 25th October 1810. Edmund and Jane Dew had eleven children, three of whom died in infancy. Edmund Dew appears to have been an uncle to James Dew, referred to on the previous page.

The 1841 Census shows Edmund, a Pilot, and Jane, both aged 50, living in the High Street with their sons, John and Thomas, both Mariners and both said to be 25, and a daughter, Mary, 15. Ages up to 15 were listed exactly as reported/recorded in the 1841 Census but ages over 15 were rounded to the nearest five years. John Dew was actually two years older than his brother, Thomas being born on 21st June 1816.

In 1851, Edmund, 61 and still a Pilot and Mary, 63, were now living in Johnson's Loke. Their three children were unmarried and living with their parents: John, 36, and Thomas, 34, were both Fishermen, Mary T., 25, a Dressmaker.

A number of changes affected the family in the ten years between the 1851 and the 1861 Censuses.

Firstly, the Blakeney parish registers record the burial of Jane Dew on 20th September 1851, aged 63.

Several months after her mother's death, John Dew's sister Mary Taylor Dew married at Blakeney on 29th February 1852 Thomas Nicholson Ierland, a Tea Dealer, born in Dumfries, and son of a Farmer; her brother John was a witness.

On 20th January 1858, John Dew's brother, Thomas married at Cley, Jemima Jary, daughter of Jacob Jary, a Carpenter.

Unlike his brothers, John Dew did not marry.

By the time of the 1861 Census, Thomas and Mary Ierland had three young children, all born in Blakeney, Mary Jane, 7, Charles Dew, 4, and Edmund Dew, 2. Living with the family at Load's Court was Mary's unmarried brother John, 56, and their widowed father, 71, described as an "Ex Pilot".

The marriage was short for Thomas Ierland died in February 1864, aged 40, and was buried in Blakeney on 12th February.

Edmund Dew died on 13th January 1865, aged 75, and was buried at Blakeney on 18th January. Probate - for Effects under £100 - was granted to his son, John Dew, the sole Executor.

After his father's death, John Dew continued to live with his (now widowed) sister. The 1871 Census shows the extended family living in the High Street.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Mary J. Ierland	Head	Widowed	47	Widow	Norfolk, Blakeney
Mary J. Ierland	Daughter	Unmarried	17		Norfolk, Blakeney
Charles D. Ierland	Son	Unmarried	14	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
Sarah A. Ierland	Daughter	Unmarried	8	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
John Dew	Brother	Unmarried	56	Fisherman	Norfolk, Blakeney
Jacob J. Dew	Nephew	Unmarried	6	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney
Edmund D. Ierland	Son	Unmarried	12	Scholar	Norfolk, Blakeney

1871 Census

John Dew died on 2nd February 1876, aged 61, and was buried on 7th February at Blakeney. Probate - Effects under £20 - was granted to his widowed sister, Mary Taylor Ierland, the sole Executor.

WILLIAM DIGMAN

William Custance Digman, a Fisherman, was born on 3rd June and baptised on 15th June 1817 in Blakeney, the son of Henry and Sarah (née Custance) Digman.

William Digman's grandfather was the twice-widowed Thomas Custance, whose third wife was the widowed Ann Custance for whom John Neal's second wife, Jane Margaret White, was working as a Servant in 1841.

William's surname is spelled variously as Digman and, possibly in error, as Diegman and Digeman. The 1841 Census indicates that his father Henry, also a Fisherman, was born in "Foreign Parts", which may explain perhaps if and/or why the surname might have been anglicised.

William Digman's father died in 1846, aged 56, and was buried at Blakeney on 7th October. In 1851, the widowed Sarah Digman, 62, was living in the High Street East and the Census shows her as a Pauper; she died in Blakeney the following year and was buried on 7th November 1851.

In 1851, William Digman, 30, was living in High Street West with Mary Ann Digman, 29, described as his wife, and the Census shows the couple in the next-but-one house to William and Jemima (née Warnes) Johnson. However, it was not until 1857 that William Digman, then aged 40, married in Norwich Mary Ann Slater, who was born circa 1822 in Banningham. Mary Ann Slater and William Digman were already living as man and wife so it was possibly expedient to marry outside their home parish and where their circumstances were not known.

In 1861, William, then a Fisherman, 42, and Mary Ann, 40, a Dressmaker, were living in Bullocks Row. The couple were living in the High Street ten years later when William, 53, was still a Fisherman and Mary Ann, 49, was now a Washerwoman.

Mary Ann Digman died in September 1873, aged 51, and the 1881 Census shows the widowed William Digman, 64, still a Fisherman and still living in the High Street. William Digman survived his wife by nearly ten years; he died on 9th January 1884, aged 66 and was buried at Blakeney on 14th January.

William Digman's two brothers, Henry, born in 1815, and Thomas, born in 1830, also became Mariners.

WILLIAM JARVIS

The 1861 Census shows two men named William Jarvis in Blakeney - one a Mariner, one a Fisherman - who would both have been of an age to take part in the 1861 rescue but possibly the strongest "contender" is William Henry Jarvis.

WILLIAM HENRY JARVIS

William Henry Jarvis was baptised at Blakeney on 3rd April 1842, the son of Henry Yaxley, a Sailor, and Sarah Ann (née Lynn) Jarvis. Both Henry and Sarah were from Blakeney and married in the parish on 31st October 1839.

The 1851 Census shows Henry Y. Jarvis, 33, a Mariner, and Sarah Ann, 32, living in Millers Court, High Street East with their three sons, William, 9, John, 7, and James, 6.

Ten years later, in the year of the disaster, William Jarvis was 19, unmarried and a Mariner; he was living in the High Street with his mother, Sarah Ann Jarvis, 41, and his grandmother, Sarah Lynn, a 68 year old widowed Charwoman. All the family were born in Blakeney.

William's uncle John Yaxley Jarvis, a Labourer, married Elizabeth Beavis, daughter of George and Mary (née Pentin), on 15th November 1831 and the couple had five sons. As referred to, Elizabeth Beavis was the younger sister of Susan Beavis who married Murrell Baines and older sister of Frances Bloom Beavis who married John Neal.

In a further connection between families, on 20th March 1864 William Henry Jarvis's cousin, James Pentin Jarvis, 22, still a Sailor, married Catherine Withers Massingham, 21, daughter of Michael Massingham, a Fisherman, one of the men lost in the 1861 disaster.

WILLIAM JARVIS

William Jarvis, son of Edward and Mary Jarvis was baptised at Blakeney on 16th April 1806.

The 1851 Census shows a William Jarvis, 45, a Mariner born in Blakeney, living in Temple Place with his wife, Ann, 46, born in Swanton. William, 54, described as a Fisherman, and Ann Jarvis, 57, were still living in Temple Place ten years later.

William was widowed by 1871, when the Census shows him still as a Fisherman, 64, with Hannah Barrett, a 64 year old widow, born in Hempstead, who was his Housekeeper. Hannah appears in the 1851 Census as a Tavern Keeper's Wife in Great Yarmouth.

William Jarvis died in 1875 aged 69 and was buried at Blakeney on 7th June.

BARTHOLOMEW JARY

Aged sixty-seven, Bartholomew Jary was the second oldest of the men who went to the rescue of the mariners in distress. He was baptised in Morston on 27th July 1794, the son of John and Anne (née Whitaker) Jary who were married at Cley on 14th April 1789.

The Register of Electors show that between 1832 and 1858, Bartholomew Jary was living in Cley.

In 1832, his address was described as a "Freehold house – Beer shop in the street", then from 1835 until 1858 as a "Freehold cottage" or "Freehold house" in the main street, in Bartholomew Jary's own occupation.

The 1841 Census shows Bartholomew Jary, 45, a Sailor, living in Cley with his parents John, 70, and Ann, 80, both described as "Independent", being of no occupation and supporting themselves financially.

Ten years later, the 1851 Census shows John, 83, Ann, 80, and Bartholomew, 56 and unmarried, living in Salthouse Road, Cley. His father's occupation was described as "Late X (unreadable) and H.M. Customs".

At the time of the 1861 Census, Bartholomew Jary was visiting his widowed sister, Susan Starling at her home on Sailors Hill; she had married Henry Starling on 11th September 1827 at Blakeney.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
Susan Starling	Head	Widow	53	Laundry	Norfolk, Morston
Ann Elizabeth Starling	Daughter	Unmarried	20	Laundry	Norfolk, Blakeney
Bartholomew Jary	Brother	Unmarried	60	Fisherman	Norfolk, Morston
John Thomas	Visitor	Unmarried	19	Mariner	South Wales, Mumbles, Glamorgan

1861 Census

Bartholomew Jary evidently moved from Cley to Blakeney at some time in the late 1850s for the Register of Electors shows him in a "Freehold cottage in the main street" from 1861 until 1882. In 1881, the Census shows him, a Mariner aged 86, living alone in Barnes Yard.

Bartholomew Jary died on 5th November 1881 and was buried on 10th November. His Will was proved at Norwich by Mary Ann Thomas, widow, Jary's niece and sole Executrix; his Personal Estate was just £2.

Mary Ann (née Starling) Thomas was the daughter of Henry Starling, a Seaman; she married on 27th January 1848 David Thomas, also a Seaman, and son of John Thomas, a Seaman.

David Thomas was one of three Blakeney mariners who lost their lives on 13th December 1864 when the 182 ton *Mignonette* was stranded and broke up off the coast of Morocco when a hurricane hit the coast of West Africa. David Thomas was the Ship's Master and a part-owner.

WILLIAM KEMP

William Kemp, referred to in the list of rescuers as “Chief Boatman, Coastguard”, was born on 8th January 1807, in Hythe, Kent, the son of William and Charlotte Martha (née Fuller) Kemp.

William Kemp was a Widower when he married Charlotte Fuller and he died on 1st October 1806, aged 45, several months before his son’s birth. Very sadly, and less than five years after his father’s death, William was orphaned when his mother died in January 1811, aged 47, when he was just four years old.

The only record found of William Kemp’s early life refers to him serving with the Hythe, Kent Coastguard when, on 8th April 1831, he was nominated to transfer to Bembridge as a Boatman. It must have been while he was stationed at Bembridge that William met Naomi Kingswell, who he married on 6th January 1833 at Brading, on the Isle of Wight.

He had moved to Morston shortly before his marriage on 3rd January 1833, and Coastguard records show him there subsequently, in 1835, 1841, 1846, 1851 and 1861.

The 1841 Census shows William, 34, and Naomi, 29, in Morston with their young family, William Friend, 7, John Kingswell, 6, Jane, 4, and Edward Thomas, 2. They were still in Morston in 1851, with three more children, whose birthplaces suggest that William might have served previously or temporarily at Wells.

Name	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age	Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
William Kemp	Head	Married	44	Boatman, Coastguard	Kent, Hythe
Naomi Kemp	Wife	Married	39		Brading, Isle of Wight
Edward Kemp	Son	Unmarried	12	Scholar	Norfolk, Morston
Sarah Ann	Daughter	Unmarried	8	Scholar	Norfolk, Wells
James Kemp	Son	Unmarried	7	Scholar	Norfolk, Wells
Eliza Kemp	Daughter	Unmarried	5	Scholar	Norfolk, Morston
Charles Kemp	Son	Unmarried	2	Scholar	Norfolk, Morston

1851 Census

In 1861, and now with two more children – Martha, 9, and Joseph, 7, both born in Burnham - William and his family were living in Coast Guard Row, Morston, in one of the four Coast Guard cottages. The Burnham birthplaces again suggest the location where William might previously have served.

William and Naomi Kemp had moved to the Isle of Wight by 1871, when the Census describes him as a Retired Coast Guard; living with the couple was their unmarried daughter, Martha, 19, and son, Joseph, 17.



William Kemp – 1878

Ten years later, William, a “Superannuated Coast Guard and Navy Pensioner”, and Naomi were still at the same address and living with them now was their unmarried daughter, Eliza, 35.

The 1891 Census shows that William, a Coast Guard Pensioner, 84, and Naomi, 79, remained on the Isle of Wight, but were living at a different address, still with their daughter Eliza, 45.

Naomi Kemp died on 22nd August 1898; William Kemp died shortly after, on 6th January 1900.

Four of William Kemp’s sons became Mariners: William Friend Kemp joined the Royal Navy; John Kingswell, James and Charles all became Master Mariners, James later becoming a shipowner.

PETER KITWOOD

As with the Baines family, it is not clear whether it was Peter Kitwood Senior, then aged about 59, or his son, also Peter, aged about 32, who went out to the assistance of the *Favorite*. Both father and son were living in Blakeney at the time and both were of an age to have crewed the second rescue boat.

PETER KITWOOD – FATHER

Peter Kitwood, the son of Wilson and Ann (née Ward) Kitwood was baptised on 31st May 1801 at Blakeney. Part of an old Blakeney family, his older brother Wilson, worked for Thomas William Temple.

Peter Kitwood and Susanna Hannant Greengrass were married by Banns in Blakeney on 26th December 1826, when both were said to be from Blakeney. Susanna, the daughter of Francis and Mary (née Plane) Greengrass of Fulmodeston, was born on 4th October 1805.

By 1841, Peter, 40, a Mariner, and Susanna, 35, were living in Westgate Street with their two daughters and four sons: Anna, 12, Sarah, 10, Peter, 9, John, 7, Thomas, 4, and Richard, 1.

Peter Kitwood – and his son, John, also a Mariner – were presumably at sea when the 1851 Census was taken for it shows Susanna Kitwood, 44, a Master Mariner's Wife, living at Brereton's Court, with Anna, 22, a Dressmaker, Richard, 10, and now also Herbert, 6, both Scholars.

Susanna Kitwood died four years later, aged 49, and was buried at Blakeney on 18th April 1855.

At the time of his son Peter's marriage in December 1856, Peter Kitwood's occupation as given on the Marriage Register was Master Mariner.

Peter Kitwood cannot be found on the 1861 Census but in 1871, a 70 year old Widower and described as a Seaman, he was living alone in Pig Street. He died five years later and was buried at Blakeney on 17th July 1876, aged 75.

PETER KITWOOD – SON

The younger Peter Kitwood was baptised on 2nd December 1832. Like his father, he became a Sailor.

In 1851, Peter Kitwood, aged 19, was twice admitted to the Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital. He was described as an Apprentice on both occasions and the records gave his length of service at sea with the Merchant Service firstly as five years and subsequently as seven years.

He was first admitted on 28th January having suffered a "Febrile Attack" (meaning a fit or seizure). The Admission Register shows that he had been serving on the *Henry & Elizabeth* and that he was discharged on 4th February.

Peter Kitwood was admitted again on 3rd November, his last service being on the *Comet*, likely to have been the Blakeney registered *Comet*. He was suffering from "Intermittent Fever" and was discharged on 15th November.

Peter Kitwood married on 25th December 1856 by Banns Sophia Wright, a Dressmaker; both Peter and Sophia were of "Full Age", both living in Hempstead at the time of their marriage, and both signed their names on the Register. Peter's occupation was described as a Sailor.

No record can be found of Peter Kitwood in the 1861 Census but Sophia, 30, a Tailoress, and her young daughter Selina, 3, were recorded as visiting a family named Money in Hempstead. The family was not together and Peter Kitwood was possibly at sea when the Census was taken, two months after the Blakeney disaster, on 7th April; this might suggest that it was his father who assisted with the rescue.

Ten years later, Peter and Sophia Kitwood, both 39, were living on the "East Side of the Street" in 1871, now with three children Mary Ann, 3, James, 8, and Selina, 1, all born in Blakeney. The couple's first daughter named Selina Kitwood had died in 1864, aged 6.

The family had moved to Goole by 1881, when the Census shows the couple with three young children Selina, 11, Elizabeth, 9, and Anna, 8, all Scholars.

Five years later, the family suffered a great loss when Peter Kitwood died, aged 56, in the West Riding Pauper Lunatic Asylum, Stanley, Yorkshire, leaving his wife and a young family. Peter Kitwood was buried in the parish church at Stanley on 19th June 1886.

In 1891, still in Yorkshire, Sophia Kitwood was working as a Housekeeper/Domestic Servant to a Widower and his young daughter. Her daughter, Anna, had married in 1890 but Selina and Elizabeth were living together in Goole, working as Dressmakers.

By 1901 and now aged 68, Sophia was living with her now married daughter, Selina, and her husband, Charles Baker, and their three young children. Ten years later and still in Goole, Sophia was then living with her daughter, Elizabeth, and her husband, Frederick Hewitt, with four teenage children by her first deceased husband George Stamps, and two babies with her second husband, Frederick Hewitt.

Sophia Kitwood died in 1920, in Hastings, aged 87.

JAMES LEE (LOVEY)

Among the rescuers' names reported in "The Aberdeen Press and Journal" and in "The Banffshire Journal" is a James Lovey but no trace has been found of anyone of this name living in or near Blakeney in 1861.

The most likely "candidate" for the man who took part in the 1861 rescue, is James William Lee who was baptised in Blakeney on 21st October 1838, the son of Joshua, a Sailor, and Margaret (née Rutland).

The 1841 Census shows Joshua, 30, described as a Fisherman, living in the High Street with his wife, Margaret, 36, and their three children, Hannah, 7, Joshua, 4, and James, 2.

Ten years later, the family's address was High Street East and their occupations as shown on the Census suggest that they were quite comfortably off; Joshua was still a Fisherman but Margaret was now a Teacher of Infants, and Hannah, 16, a School Mistress's Assistant. James William Lee, 12, was a Scholar, as was another daughter, Jemima, 9.

In 1861, James Lee, 22, was a Mate on the *Camillia*, an 87 ton schooner – official number 21214 - registered to Blakeney and Cley and engaged in the coasting trade. The Census gives the ship's location as being off Cromer. The Master, Miles Lane, was a Blakeney man as were two other crew members, William Manfield and William Pentin Jarvis. Robert Jary, Able Seaman, was from Wiveton.

Two years later, James Lee, 24, married by Licence Phoebe Daniel, 22, on 11th March 1863 at Blakeney, by which time James was said to be a Master Mariner; the Marriage Certificate shows that his father, Joshua Lee was a Sailor. Phoebe Daniel was a daughter of Samuel and Ann (née Jary); her father was also a Master Mariner.

The couple's only child, also Phoebe, was born in 1864 and baptised on 21st August; she married on 30th September 1891 Francis Kerrison, 28, a Sailor and son of Francis Kerrison, a Mariner. Phoebe Kerrison died in 1910, aged 46.

Phoebe Lee, 30, and her daughter, Phoebe, 7, a Scholar, were living "On the Hill, Blakeney" in 1871 but James was not at home, presumably, at sea.

In 1881, the Census shows that James Lee, 42, was Master of the *Newcastle Packet* - official number 21204 - a 53 ton sailing vessel registered to Cley; the ship was at Durham. His two crew members were also Blakeney men; John Massingham, 32, was the Mate and John Wells, 27, an Able Seaman. John Massingham was the son of Michael Massingham who lost his life in the 1861 disaster.

In 1901, James and Phoebe, now 62 and 60, were still living on The Hill and the Census describes James as "Pilot, Seas". Ten years later, the Census shows James and Phoebe Lee still living on The Hill and with them was James Herbert Long, 22, James Lee's nephew, the son of George Bennington Long and his wife Catherine Charlotte (née Daniel, Phoebe Lee's sister). Catherine Long had died in 1905, hence perhaps her son living with his aunt and her husband in 1911. James Herbert Long died on 4th November 1918; his father was granted Probate.

James William Lee died in 1916 aged 78. Phoebe Lee died on 19th September 1925 and Probate - Effects of £293. 8s. - was granted to Lucy Starling (wife of William Starling) and to William Starling, a builder.

THOMAS LOADS

Thomas Loads was born in September 1789 in Blakeney, the son of Thomas and Alice (née Bond). At seventy-one years old, he was the oldest man to take part in the rescue of the *Favorite's* crew and the recovery of his fellow fishermen.

Thomas Loads was married twice, firstly – as a single man – on 8th January 1819 to Susanna Bond, a Widow, also of Blakeney. The surnames suggest that Thomas's mother, Alice, and his wife, Susanna, were possibly related.

The Blakeney parish records show the likely marriage of Thomas's first wife; Susannah Howard of Blakeney was married to Thomas Bond of Blakeney on 12th February 1789. Thomas Bond died on 3rd May 1818, aged 55, and was buried at Blakeney on 6th May.

Thomas Loads was much younger than his wife; he was about thirty years old when he married Susanna who, born circa 1768, was about fifty-one. The marriage lasted just ten years, Susanna Loads died on 31st March 1829, aged 61, and was buried at Blakeney, with her first husband, on 5th April. The headstone marks the grave of Thomas Bond and his wife, Susanna, but parish records confirm that she was indeed the same Susanna Loads who was buried on 5th April.

Marriage Bonds show that Thomas Loads, Widower, was married a second time, on 5th December 1832, to Susan Nichols, a Spinster, of West Beckham, who was born circa 1789.

In 1851, the Census shows Thomas, 62, a Retired Fisherman, and his wife, Susan, also 62, living at Load's Court, where the couple were still living ten years later.

Thomas Loads was buried at Blakeney on 11th April 1867, aged 78. Probate was granted to his brother, William, a Fisherman, and to Benjamin Henry Nichols, a Merchant.

Susan Loads survived her husband for just a few years; parish records show that she was buried at Blakeney on 30th November 1870, when her age was given as 85.

WILLIAM PELL

William Pell was born circa 1805 in Morston and was married in his home parish to Elizabeth Kendle, also of Morston but born in Binham, on 21st November 1828. The Marriage Register records William's age as 24, Elizabeth's as 22.

At the time of the 1851 Census, William, 46, and Elizabeth, 43, were living in Morston with their seven children, all born in Binham: Eliza, 22, Caroline, 16, Barnabus, 14, Robert, 12, Charles, 10, Martha, 6, and Anna Maria, 1.

In 1861, the Census shows William, 56, a Fisherman, and Elizabeth, 53, in Bucks or Burks Court, Morston, with only their daughters, Martha, 17, and Hannah, 11, who was described as a "Cripple".

Elizabeth Pell died in January 1870, aged 61, and was buried on 26th January at Morston. Just over a year later, when the 1871 Census was taken, William Pell, 66, was living at Stiffkey Road, Morston, together with his unmarried daughter (whose name was given as) Anna Maria, 21, described as a Housekeeper.

Ten years later, the 1881 Census shows that the widowed William Pell, 76, was of "No Occupation" and living in Church Street Stiffkey, with his daughter and son-in-law, Elizabeth, 51, and Robert Howell, 58, an unmarried sister-in-law Eliza Kendle, 77, and a great niece.

William Pell was buried on 4th August 1882 at Morston, aged 77.

JOHN WALLER

John Waller was born in Blakeney circa 1828, the son of William, a Ship's Porter, who was born in Aylsham and Ann (née Tuck) Waller, born in Weybourne who were married at Blakeney on 17th November 1816.



The 1841 Census shows John, 44, and Ann, 45, living in Westgate with their sons, John, 12, and William, 3.

In 1851, the Census shows William, still a Ship's Porter, Ann, John and William living in Pig Street together with William's father, a Chelsea Pensioner.

John Waller was described as a Mariner and his Master's Certificate of Service – dated 29th March 1851 and issued from the port of Cley - describes that he was born in 1828 and had been employed as a “Boy Seaman and Master” in the Coasting and Foreign Trades for nine years.

In 1858, in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, John Waller married Mary Capes, born circa 1837, daughter of William (deceased) and Sarah Elizabeth Capes. Her late father had been a Farrier and Innkeeper of the Trent Port Inn in Saundby, Nottinghamshire.

At the time of the 1861 Census, John Waller was Master of the *Little Helen* of Wells, a 72 ton Foreign and Coasting vessel - official number 77 - which was docked in Dorset. His crew of four were all Norfolk men and one, John Otway, 33, the Mate, was also from Blakeney. Mary Waller was living in East End, Wells, with a one year old son, Edward, who was born in Saundby.

John and Mary Waller were in Blakeney by the time their second son, Henry Capes was born on 21st May 1867; he was baptised on 29th August 1870, together with his sister Susan, who was born on 21st June 1869. John Waller's occupation was given as Master Mariner.

The 1871 Census shows Mary Waller, 34, a Master Mariner's Wife, living at Temple Place with two sons and two daughters whose ages ranged from one month to eleven years. At the same time, John, 43, was the Master of the *London Packet*, a 57 ton coasting vessel - official number 21205 – docked at Harrison's Wharf, near St Katherine's by the Tower; three of his four-man crew were from Blakeney, one from Cley.

John Waller's father died in June 1871 aged 74 at Blakeney. The Probate record shows that John Waller's brother-in-law was John Otway, Pilot, the same man who had served with him as the Mate on the *Little Helen* in 1861.

WALLER William. Effects under £800.	15 November.	The Will with a Codicil of William Waller late of Blakeney in the County of Norfolk Yeoman who died 6 June 1871 at Blakeney was proved at Norwich by John Waller of Blakeney Master Mariner the Son and Mary Ann Otway (Wife of John Otway, Pilot) of Blakeney the Daughter two of the Executors.
--	--------------	---

John Waller was at sea when the 1861 and 1871 Censuses were taken but he was at home in 1881. Now aged 54 and a Master Mariner, he was living at Temple Place with his wife, Mary, 44, and five (of their nine) children aged between 3 and 13, all born in Blakeney.

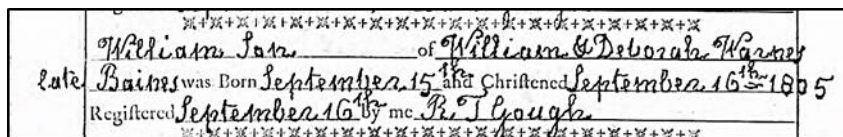
The 1891 Census, however, suggests a possible down-turn in the family's situation; the couple and their three youngest sons had by then moved to Norman Terrace, Campbell Street in Kingston-upon-Hull. Other people in the street were Fishermen, Mariners, Sailmakers, Shipwrights but John Waller was a Railway Porter and one of his sons was a Wagoneteer Driver/Groom.

Perhaps the family had only recently settled in Yorkshire in 1891 and John had found whatever position he could at the time or quickly, for by 1901 and still at Norman Terrace, the Census shows that he was now engaged in an occupation more akin to his maritime experience; John, aged 70, was a Port Watchman. With him was his wife, Mary, 67, and the couple's youngest son, George, 30.

John Waller died in 1908, aged 78. Mary Waller continued to live in Hull and the 1911 Census shows her living with her married son, William, and a grandson. She died in August 1913, aged 76.

WILLIAM WARNES

William Warnes was born in Blakeney on 15th September 1805, the son of William, a Sailor, and Deborah (née Baines) who were married in Blakeney on 12th August 1802. He married on 14th November 1844 Diana Hurn, born circa 1808 in Swanton Novers and daughter of Thomas Hurn, a Labourer.



William and Diana Warnes, both 43, were living at Custance Court in 1851, when the Census describes William as a Fisherman and Diana as a Dame School Mistress.

Ten years later and still at the same address, Diana was recorded on the Census as an Infant School Mistress.

The couple were living in the High Street in 1871, when William was still a Fisherman but no occupation is recorded for Diana. By 1881, the couple were living in Sand Yard.

Diana Warnes died in 1882, aged 74. William lived for a further seven years; he died in 1889 aged 83.

THE WRECK REGISTER - 1861

“Our shores are converted into altars, on which the ocean offers his victims.”

The loss of so many lives at Blakeney - in which fishermen and sailors went out in their own boats to the aid of other mariners in distress – must have had devastating impact on the families affected and the community as a whole.

Eighteen months after the tragedy, “The Herts Guardian” of 11th October 1862 – commenting on Board of Trade statistics and other information about the losses at sea, and promoting the work of the National Life Boat Association – put the events at Blakeney into the wider context of danger at sea.

The newspaper gave much detail and commentary on Board of Trade statistics about the loss of ships and of fishermen and mariners in the preceding years, notably in 1861.

All those who leave us (Britain) or approach us must do so by this great highway, which carries on its bosom in the course of one year alone, to and from our own ports, 267,770 ships, including repeated voyages, and which ships have probably been manned by 1,600,000 souls.

Such is the field of operations over which these dry statistics of the Board of Trade carry us. As usual, they have been most ably drawn up and collated in every possible form. Yet on nearly every page of this Register these startling facts, in admonitory terms, face us, that 1,494 shipwrecks occurred on British shores last year, from which 884 people are known to have perished.

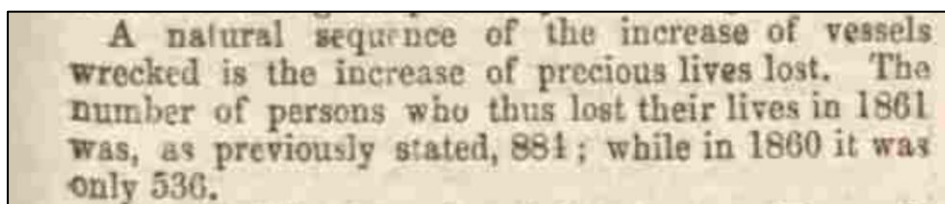
The number of wrecks last year has unfortunately exceeded the number during any of the preceding nine years, and it is 260 in excess of the annual average of the last six years.

It is a lamentable fact that shipwrecks on our coasts have been of late on the increase. Thus during the last seven years we find the following account: In 1855, 1,111; 1856, 1,153; 1857, 1,143; 1858, 1,170; 1859, 1,416; 1860, 1,379; 1861, 1,491.

We are told that this great increase of disasters in 1861 was owing to the fearful gales of January, February, and November of that year, when 812 wrecks took place, principally among our rotten collier class of vessels. Gales, even of a moderate character, are always destructive to these ships; or, in other words, they are doomed to certain destruction under circumstances in which a ship, if seaworthy and properly manned and found, ought to be able to keep the sea. The best harbours of refuge in the world would not, therefore, prevent a tithe of these disasters, which unfortunately too often occur where neither the life-boat nor the rocket apparatus is available to succour their unfortunate crews.

The Herts Guardian - 11th October 1862

The report and the statistics, showing a greater number of lives lost in 1861, were particularly pertinent to the tragedy at Blakeney.



A natural sequence of the increase of vessels wrecked is the increase of precious lives lost. The number of persons who thus lost their lives in 1861 was, as previously stated, 884; while in 1860 it was only 536.

The report described that the number of collisions was also on the increase but that “during the past six years, 750 collisions have taken place in clear and fine weather, 378 from bad look-out, 264 from neglect of rule of road at sea, and 61 from actual want of seamanship; the gross total of collisions during the past six years have been 1,864”.

Both the 366 ton *Favorite* and the 93 ton *Kingston* which went aground off Blakeney were carrying coal and must be among the ships recorded in the Board of Trade's statistics.

The total number of casualties in two years is 2,873, out of which 1,660, or about seven-twelfths of the whole, happened to ships of the collier class—a fearful disproportion, and calling loudly for a thorough and searching investigation.

The following table distinguishes clearly the description and tonnage of the ships lost during the past year:—

	Vessels.
Vessels under 50 tons	228
51 and under 100 "	434
101 " 300 "	639
301 " 600 "	135
601 " 900 "	31
901 " 1,200 "	18
1,200 and upwards	5
Unknown	4
Total	1,494

Let us briefly analyse the causes of this great destruction of property: We find that 10 wrecks took place in a perfectly still sea, 14 in light airs, 51 in light breezes, 43 in gentle breezes, 103 in moderate breezes, 171 in fresh breezes, 149 in strong breezes, 66 in moderate gales, 124 in fresh gales, 230 in strong gales, 311 in whole gales, 102 in storms, 52 in hurricanes, and 68 in unknown and variable weather. Total wrecks, 1,494. Of these 619 took place amongst ships in the home and coasting trade, commanded by men not required by law to have certificates of competency. 266 wrecks only occurred amongst vessels in the home trade commanded by masters holding certificates of service; so that the rivalry between ignorance and knowledge is an unequal one, as it ever has been and ever will be.

The estimated loss on these 1,494 wrecks is upwards of one million sterling. But who can estimate the loss of the valuable lives who also thus perished with the ships? Many a widow and orphan in our seaport towns and fishing villages will tell us how severely they have felt their bereavement!

The accompanying roll of the loss of life on British shores and waters during the past twelve years will be perused with melancholy interest. The districts are thus classified:—

	Lives lost.
Farn Islands to Flamborough Head.....	670
Flamborough Head to the North Foreland.....	1,068
North Foreland to St. Catherine's Point.....	514
St. Catherine's Point to Start Point.....	82
Start Point to the Land's End	460
Land's End to Hartland Point, including Scilly	353
Hartland Point to St. David's Head.....	473
St. David's Head and Carnsore Point to Lambay Island and Skerries, Anglesey	969
Skerries and Lambay to Fair Head and Mull of Cantire.....	1,597
Cape Wrath to Buchan Ness.....	257
Buchan Ness to Farn Islands	280
All other parts of the coast	922
Total lives lost.....	7,645

The Herts Guardian - 11th October 1862

The newspaper's comment about those widowed and orphaned as a result of the numerous losses at sea was especially poignant in the light of what happened at Blakeney.

The newspaper also referred to the success of the RNLi and to the first lifeboat for Blakeney being funded by Cecilia Brightwell.

THE FIRST LIFEBOAT - BRIGHTWELL

A board in St Nicholas's church records that, following and as a result of the 1861 rescue attempted by fishermen in their own boats, Blakeney acquired its first National Life Boat Association (now RNLI) lifeboat in 1862, the cost of which was "presented by a Lady", a Miss Brightwell of Norwich. Contributions were also made by the Marquis of Townshend and the Earl of Leicester, and Lord Calthorpe gave £100 towards the cost of the boathouse.

Both "The Norfolk Chronicle" and "The Suffolk Chronicle" of 4th October 1862 reported on the acquisition and launch of the new lifeboat and noted that the Reverend Tillard "had rendered the Institution valuable assistance in establishing this life-boat station".

The "Miss Brightwell" after whom the boat was named was Cecilia Lucy Brightwell (1811-1875), the eldest child of Ann and Thomas. Thomas Brightwell was a Solicitor and a former Mayor of Norwich. In 1861, Cecilia, 49 and unmarried, was living in Surrey Street, Norwich with her father, 74, and mother, 72, together with three servants.

"The Dictionary of National Biography" shows Cecilia Lucy Brightwell as an etcher and author, and a pupil of the artist John Sell Cotman.

"The Norfolk Chronicle" of 11th October 1862 carried a report of the launch of the *Brightwell* and "The Herts Guardian" of the same date refers to "Miss Brightwell, honouring her father, pays the cost of the Blakeney boat, and calls it after his name".

The Dictionary describes that: "Her philanthropic spirit was shown in her exertions and contribution of £180 for the "Brightwell" lifeboat put on the Norfolk coast at Blakeney."

However, the *Brightwell's* time in service was short.

Blakeney's first lifeboat was launched four times but, six-oared, was found to be too small for the station; she capsized, without loss of life, in May 1863 and was replaced in the same year with a larger boat. This second boat, also named *Brightwell* was, in turn, replaced in 1873 by a new one, the *Hettie*.

"On Tuesday last an event of a very interesting and important character took place at Blakeney. The life-boat presented by Miss Brightwell to the Royal National Life-boat Institution for service on that dangerous part of our coast, was launched at Blakeney quay, in the presence of a large concourse of spectators, who, notwithstanding the severity of the weather, had assembled to witness the event. The boat on her carriage, with the crew seated in her, was drawn from Mr. G. Hudson's premises where she had been placed on her arrival from Wells, to the top of the principal street, and thence to the quay, where, after being named in the usual manner by Mr. Tillard, who officiated in the absence of Miss Brightwell, she was launched into the water amid the hearty cheers and good wishes of all who were present. As the boat proceeded to the point she was stopped alongside one of the vessels in the harbour, and turned bottom upwards twice, in order to give a practical proof of her self-righting capabilities. After a cold collation, provided by the local committee at the boat-house, the boat was pulled out to sea in order to rest her as thoroughly as possible, and to give the boatmen all possible confidence in her. It is needless to say that all united in praising her and her performance. The launch and trial of the boat were carried on under the superintendence of Capt. Ward, R.N., inspector of lifeboats. Universal regret was felt at the absence of Miss Brightwell, the benevolent donor. The guests of the committee were re-landed at Blakeney quay at about five pm., highly delighted with their day – the severe weather having served to exhibit the powers of the boat to the greatest perfection.

The Norfolk Chronicle - 11th October 1862

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to:

- Drew Leslie for contacting the BHA in response to my original report and for generously sharing his grandfather, John Leslie's memoir from which much more information about the 1861 Disaster has emerged.
- Kevin Stott for contacting the BHA in response to my original report and for generously sharing information about his Neale family.
- Margaret Hartley for sharing information about her Dew ancestors in Blakeney.
- Vivien O'Connell for sharing information about her Kemp ancestors in Blakeney.
- Gill Fitzpatrick for her great interest and help and for the benefit of her experience as a researcher.
- Simon Gresham for proof-reading many draft versions of this report as and when it was updated.

REFERENCES

- The Blakeney Disaster of 1861 – John Wright, The Glaven Historian
- The Highs and Lows of Living in Blakeney – Some Thoughts on Mariners and Their Memorials – Pamela Peake, The Glaven Historian
- Have You Heard About Blakeney? – Peter Brooks
- The Rescues of the Wells & Blakeney Lifeboats – Nick Bensley, incorporating Blakeney Lifeboats – Jonathan Hooton
- Facts, Legends and Myths on the Evolution of Resuscitation - Stathis Avramidis Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Greece); Leeds Metropolitan University (UK); The Lifesaving Foundation (Ireland)
- Story of the Allan Line – N.R.P. Bonsor
- Preventive Waterguard/Coast Guard 1816 – 1832 Records, Isle of Wight
- The Dictionary of National Biography
- British Newspaper Archive (The British Library Board)
- CLIP - Crew List Index Project – website
- University of Aberdeen, Special Collections
- Genealogical records – Ancestry, Family Search, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- Sir George Grey Special Collections - Auckland Libraries