

Another step back in time for Thurlestone School Children

Written by Lily (aged 9)

Children from All Saints Primary School took another step back in time at the end of March continuing their historic trail around the Parish to find out about our local heritage. Children aged 8-10 took part in a long walk around Bantham and Buckland, taking in points of interest such as Coronation Quay and the Boathouse, the Lime Kiln, the Stone Stile, the Bantham Streetscape, the Water Trough and Well Pump, the Leat and the Butterwells. The idea is to inspire the children to think about local history in the area; to give them some appreciation of how people used to live, and to promote a sense of place and connection to the area they live in.



Billy aged 9 said, 'During the Second World War there were mines and barbed wire to stop the Germans coming up the beach and attacking. There was a pillbox where the lifeguard hut is now'.

Ruby aged 8 said, 'In the olden days they used to pick daffodils and send them to Covent Garden. It was Connor's Great Grandma and Great Aunty'.

When I heard we were going on a walk, I was excited as it maybe meant missing a little bit of maths as well! We were lucky with the weather as the sun was shining. My whole class, 25 of us, were soon ready to go with lots of snacks, bottles of water and excitement in our bellies to see what we would discover. Living in Thurlestone, it was nice to know we would be learning about what the area used to be like, what it looked like and what happened in the olden days. We had a question and answer sheet and worked in pairs to make sure we didn't miss anything on our way around! My Grandad loves history so I was excited to share with him what I found out. I loved seeing pictures of Burgh Island without the hotel and also hearing about the history of the Pilchard pub and when the pilchards stopped coming in 1866 – we all remembered that date when we got back to school! I heard lots of oohs and wows when we talked about the barbed wire on the beach during the wars and the pillboxes to check for the enemy. Who knew so much had happened on the beach where I go surfing with my Dad? It was epic to hear about the submarine net under Jenkins' Quay to stop the enemy as well – you would never have known that this happened in that spot.

Giles aged 9 said, 'We went on to a path where Mrs. Ryan-Carter explained there used to be an old Viking trading centre and that there were battles on the Ham between the Saxons and Danes. I was really interested in the Saxons, Vikings, and Romans all settling in one spot and I had no idea about it. So that is my most interesting thing. The first historical place we went to was down to Coronation Quay, which was built in the 1600s, and the boathouse in Bantham. These were originally fishermen's sheds until the current boathouse was built in 1936 with a figurehead of Lady Jane Franklin'.

Elliot aged 9 said, 'I saw my house. The Watch is a really big house and was used to watch the river and smugglers and fishing.'





But we marched on, like the soldiers (!) because we had lots more to see and headed towards the Coronation Quay boathouse. We met a man called Marsh and his dog. Marsh knew A LOT about the area and boats...we didn't want to leave this part of the walk as we had so many more questions to ask Marsh. He let us walk around, look at old photos that were black and white and meet his dog. He showed us the mark where the water came up the last time the boathouse flooded in 1989.

Ruby aged 8 said, 'The pilchards oil was used for burning lamps. They used to smoke the pilchards at Pilchard Cellars in a pilchard palace. The Boathouse was built for the Coronation of George V1. There was a crown at the top of the Boathouse. Marsh makes boats in the top and stores them. He opens a big trap door and lowers the boats down'.

Billy aged 9 said, 'The highest flood line is still seen on the side of the boat-house'.

Emma aged 9 said, 'The boathouse had some figureheads. It was built for King George's Coronation. The boats hung from the ceiling. There was an upstairs bit. Marsh had a model and plans of the boat that he was building called a Bantham Boat'.



We also learnt all about Bantham Boats and how they are a very traditional wooden boat, which takes 3 months to build – some of us guessed just a few weeks and we were wrong!



Just a few steps up the hill, we then stopped to look at the Lime Kiln and talked about what lime is used for. As a big horse fan, I really loved knowing that a shire horse and cart brought the lime up from barges on the river – I wish I could have lived in this time to see that! Bantham has lots of old history that hasn't changed in hundreds of years. We saw an old stile which was used to let the water from the floods flow out, it was also there to let animals through like a cat flap.

Freddie aged 8 said, 'On Burgh Island there was a stone hut. A man used to watch out for fish. When there was a big shoal he would ring a bell so the fishermen would go out to catch the fish'. **Rosie** aged 8 said, 'They brought the pilchards and lime up from the quay in a horse and cart. Pilchard Cellars would have smelt quite bad. They used to leave them in there to dry'. **Georgia** aged 9 said, 'The kiln was like a mini castle' and **Anna** aged 9 added, 'There was a little cottage next to it where the people used to sleep and look after the kiln'. **Georgia** said, 'We met Marsh and his dog. He said that he keeps care of other people's boats. It was interesting to see the different types of boats and stacks of sails'. **Ruby** aged 8 said, 'The lime was used for fertiliser to help the plants grow'. **Charlie Rose** aged 9 said, 'Lime is a type of stone and a man used to stand below and shovel lime and coal in. It was melting it to turn it into powder for building and fertilizer'.



I had seen the trough and water pump in Thurlestone before so it was interesting to see that Buckland had one too. It is really hard to believe that this was how people used to get their water – we are so used to having water at our fingertips now whenever and wherever we want it. Again, I like hearing that horses may have drunk from these troughs too. It seems a very long time ago that water was first piped here in 1888 – not even our parents are that old!

Emma aged 9 said, *'There was a special bench and railings. It was to remember farmer Adams and it showed a farmer ploughing the fields. His friends and family look after it'.*



Giles aged 9 said, *'I saw three water pumps and a water trough. In 1888 water was pumped from the pumping station by the river up to Aunemouth reservoir and then back down to the troughs to create pressure and a tap'.*

Rosie aged 8 said, *'The water pump was by Well Cottage. I found it interesting how people went there every day to collect water'.*



Anna aged 9 said, *'I remember that the stile by the cottages had a hole in it that was used for rain-water. It almost worked like a drain. It was slightly lopsided like it was man-made. So people would have stepped over it'.*

Elliot aged 9 said, *'It was a big square rock with a hole in it. It was used to control floods. And the water would go through the hole'.*





Jed aged 8 said, *'The butcher called Moore used to hang the meat in this building. His apples used to make the best cider around'.*



The end of the Leat connects back to the river and the tunnel is about as tall as an adult but it has silted up.

As we didn't have time on the day, some of us went for an extra walk after school to see the Leat in Buckland. Lots of us didn't really know what a leat was at first or what one looked like, so it was very cool to be able to walk alongside it and the wild flowers growing in the field below were just beautiful. I wish I knew the name of them all but I'll just call them rainbow flowers for now because that's what they looked like to me! We also saw some old Butterwells which were used to store milk and butter, and the butcher and slaughterhouse.

Joel aged 9 said, *'I was really interested in the Butterwells. There are a few of them along the river in Buckland. People would put their butter, milk and things that they wanted to keep cold in the butterwell. The cold air would enter the well from a stream or a spring. We found out about the Butterwells in Peter Hurrell's book and then went to find them'.*



We worked out that in the end we had walked almost four miles on our trip around Bantham and Buckland so we were very pleased that our halfway (ish) stop was at the Bantham Cafe for a well-earned squash and some snacks. It was nice to take a moment to sit down and look at the lovely views from there. I normally have a hot chocolate when I go with my family!

This trail will form part of the Parish Neighbourhood Plan's evidence base of heritage assets in the parish with a view to protecting and conserving them for future generations.