

# Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

## Newsletter

Volume 34 Number 1

### SEPTEMBER 2005

#### What's On

**22 September 2005 "The Barber's Point Project" by Duncan Allen**

The Aldeburgh and District Local History Society obtained a grant to carry out a full-scale dig on the north bank of the River Alde, led by professional archaeologists from Suffolk County Council

**13 October 2005 "500 years of Shopping in Beccles" by David Lindley**

This expert Beccles historian will describe town shopping between 1430 and 1930

**27 October 2005 "Suffolk Museums Working Together" by Lyn Gash**

(Suffolk Museums Officer and Curatorial Adviser)

**10 November 2005 "Aviation Archaeology – The Search for East Anglia's Missing Warplanes"**

by **Bob Collis** (Lowestoft War Memorial Museum)

**24 November 2005 "Landmarks in Movie History" by Mark Mitchels** The story of a wonderful invention, with extracts from many important moments (1.5 hr programme)

**All meetings are held in the SOUTH LOWESTOFT METHODIST CHURCH HALL, at the corner of LONDON ROAD SOUTH and CARLTON ROAD, at 7.30 pm (Entry via LONDON ROAD SOUTH)**

*Please ring bell if the door is locked*

#### Chairman's Column

I hope you all had an enjoyable break and are looking forward to our new season of talks. At the 8 September meeting, Pip Wright gave an interesting presentation *The Diary of a Poor Suffolk Woodman* – the first of a wide range of talks arranged by Myra before she stood down for a well-earned break. We hope we have now found a member willing to take her place as programme secretary and will say more about that later. Don Friston is now editing and producing the Newsletter, for which we are very grateful.

The Museum has had a busy time this year. Sadly, we have lost a few regular stewards, causing difficulties with our

all-day, every-day, seasonal opening schedule. Happily, a few new stewards have been recruited and some society members have rallied round to help, but we urgently need more volunteers. Let us know if you can spare one or two mornings/afternoons, particularly at weekends, to provide cover if a regular is ill or unavailable. The Museum remains open until the end of October and I shall soon be providing details for its end of season get-together.

Although it may seem early to talk about the Society's pre-Christmas meal, it is suggested that we return to the College. This seems a good idea, as we had an excellent meal there last year, and I hope you all agree.

With good wishes **Lilian Fisher**

### **Your Committee**

Lilian Fisher Chairman Irene Ashman Secretary Ray Collins Treasurer

Don Friston Newsletter Editor Keith Davies Prog. Sec. until Dec. John Knowles Prog. Sec. after Dec.

Ron Ashman Comm. Member Les Wilmot Comm. Member Cyril Percival Comm. Member

**Society Web Site: [www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk](http://www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk)**

**Please give any items you have for inclusion in the Newsletter to Don Friston, at Society meetings.**

**PLEASE NOTE! Copies of the 120-page CARLTON COLVILLE VILLAGE HISTORY BOOK are now available to members at the half-price offer of £2.50, through Newsletter editor Don Friston.**

#### **9 June 2005 "Members Evening" which featured three short talks**

**The First Man to Fly in Suffolk?** by Margaret Sanders, told of her relation Capt. H Sanders and his brother, whose company set up flying tests in 1908. Sir Robert Gooch allowed use of land between Kessingland and Benacre where they hand-built all of their Type 1 biplane, known locally as the *Benacre Flying Machine*, except for the Brooke (Lowestoft) engine. A report in the *East Anglian Daily Times* stated their aim was to supply reliable, easy-to-fly machines for others to use in competition. After numerous tests, watched by the public, the plane collided with telephone wires and was wrecked. Moving to Beccles common, in 1910, they constructed the Type 2 with a number of revolutionary features. After successful short flights this more powerful machine was in the Olympia Aero Show, in 1911, priced £1,000. However, the company did not continue after WWI, Captain Sanders having apparently changed interests. He lived until 1962. Excellent original pictures of the biplanes were shown.

**The Museum's Spanish Flag**, by Sarah and Bill Hudson, gave the history of this flag, now in the Lowestoft museum at Everitt's Park. At the 1718 Battle of Passaro, in the Mediterranean, the crew of the 60-gun British warship *Superb* boarded the Spanish 74-gun *Real St Felipe*. Lieutenant Arnold, of the well-known Lowestoft family, was seriously wounded during this action and given the flag, as a naval prize, because of his bravery. He brought it back to Lowestoft where it was displayed on suitable occasions. Admiral Byng's British fleet won the day but the Spanish were less fortunate, their admiral dying of his wounds soon after, and the *Real St Felipe* being blown up. The very large flag (285 x 235cm) is of green woollen material with a striking heraldic design. It combines elements from several countries including France, Portugal, Austria, Hungary and Belgium. The design is surrounded by a linked collar border, having a Golden Fleece at the foot and symbolic flames at each side. The colours remain vivid although some damage occurred in the WWII bombardment.

**The Reluctant Bishop**, by Ray Collins, told of Lowestoft's link with a famous clergyman. John Charles Ryle, born of rich parents in Macclesfield, went to a vicarage-based prep school, followed by Eton and then Oxford, where he was outstanding at cricket. Family bankruptcy forced him to become a curate. He then had a poorly-paid living in Winchester. Moving to Helmingham, Suffolk, where the Tollemache family were influential, brought a dramatic improvement. They liked his evangelistic leanings and he was able to publish and sell tracts, so his yearly earnings rose from £100 to £400. Sadly, between 1845 and 1869 he lost three wives, the last in Stradbroke where he was a popular clergyman. Now prominent in the Church Council he travelled widely. He became Dean of Salisbury, then (at Disraeli's request) Bishop of Liverpool, constantly campaigning for better conditions for clergy. In his 85th year he became very ill and retired to Lowestoft (having holidayed and preached there regularly during his life) to be nursed by his youngest daughter at Kirkley Cliff. After a very short time he died and was interred with his wife at Childwall, Liverpool.

**23 June 2005 "Annual Church Outing" – led by Terry Weatherley**

Members first visited the Roman Catholic Church of St Bene't, Beccles. The church is unusual as it is orientated north south instead of east west, with its altar to the south end, plus, it has its own graveyard. Built between 1900 and 1908 to a cruciform plan and designed by local Catholic architect, Frederick Banham, it was funded by the Kenyon family of Gillingham Hall. Of superb quality, the exterior has many variations in detail around its Norman arches. There is a large apse beyond its slightly offset square tower. Inside, below the high vaulted roof, clerestory and triforia, is an ambulatory containing relief-sculpted stations of the cross. North (east) of the crossing is the Lady chapel of circular plan. The rood is inscribed *Sic Deus Dilexit Mundum*, 'God so Loved the World'.

The next church, St Botolph, believed to be early 13th century, is narrow, thatched, of straight-line design and built of flint-rubble; it is set in a large squarish churchyard. The slender square tower has quoins of narrow red brick. In the 14th century a porch was added, protecting the superbly carved Norman arch to the south door. An amazing set of late 13th century wall paintings, conserved in the mid 1980s, covers much of both chancel walls. These depict events before and after the crucifixion and are said to be the best in Suffolk. Intertwining among all the images is the vine (symbol of St Botolph). The well-preserved font is 15th century.

## **8 September 2005 "Diary of a Poor Suffolk Woodman" – by Pip Wright**

This was a lively description of William Scarfe, a communicant who chanced to have been given a prayer book by his Rector in 1827. Possessed of the then rare skill of writing, this hard-working woodman was driven to record and date his life and local scene wherever he could find space in the margins of this book. He wrote using a Suffolk dialect style in a natural, uncomplicated way, not being too conscious of capitals or punctuation.

Not much is known of William's childhood in Bradfield St George, but there were free school places for the poor and he may have had one of these. In time, he found employment in Thorpe Morieux, near Lavenham, married and had a family, including five grandchildren, who all followed in his trade. William's elder brother was a successful tenant farmer and quite generous – his presents included pigs, a horse, and even the thatched Thorpe Farm cottage, where William's family were to live on into the 1900s. Quite as important, was the allotment to the cottage of about half an acre of additional ground, under instructions from the Lord of the Manor.

The woodman's routine described in the prayer book followed a seasonal pattern. In September he would fell and coppice trees according to size. Ash poles would be cut first, then rived (split) in October, being required for huddle (hurdle) making in November. Hazel rods would be retained for laying across thatched corn stacks, with shorter split lengths twisted into broaches (like large hairpins) used to secure the cross pieces. Large oak trees would be felled and carefully stripped of their bark in March. This would be stored and sold in May to the local tannery. Then 'brushing' would begin to rid the woods of small undergrowth. This was bundled into faggots to fire ovens and kilns at the local brickworks. Other tradesmen, such as neighbour William North, a wheelwright and coffin-maker, used the large timber, after seasoning. At the end of June, William would leave the woods and be employed on the farm at haymaking, harvesting and general work until September, when the cycle began again.

Not all the notes refer to work. The variety of subjects includes medical conditions and crime (Bury had a new hospital and a new prison at this time); numerous accidents on farms and when travelling on the rough roads. Entertainment included fairs in Thorpe Morieux and surrounding villages and, best of all, he records a splendid 'festable' (festival) by order of the squire, to celebrate the coronation of the young Queen Victoria. Surviving records state this ticket only event was catered to excess.