

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

NEWSLETTER

Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

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What's On

9 February 2006 "The Landscape History of the Somerleyton Estate" by Tom Williamson
A chance to learn more about our neighbouring stately home

23 February 2006 "Tønning and Tonning Street" by Hans Boje
How the streets just north of the river in Lowestoft were given their names

9 March 2006 "Roman Catholic and Classical Rome" by Arthur Middleton
Including unique pictures from the speaker's collection

23 March 2006 "The Prehistoric Archaeology of Carlton Colville" by Jez Meredith
Further details of the village's history exposed during building development

27 April 2006 "The Yarmouth Story: 1000 years of history" by Colin Tooke
The changing story and development of a Norfolk coastal town

11 May 2006 "Pottery through the Ages" by Alice Lyons
(Norfolk Archaeological Unit)

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

Last month, Terry Weatherley's talk on William Butterfield was, as his talks always are, informative and interesting. Then Colin Dixon produced an equally good presentation on Howard Hollingsworth; exploring the life of Lowestoft's first Freeman, a town benefactor rarely spoken of nowadays.

On 2 February, 32 members and guests attended our annual dinner at *Le Plaisir* Restaurant at Lowestoft College, an enjoyable evening with a really good meal and good company.

Our Museum reopens for the Summer Season just before Easter, on Monday 27 March. I am arranging a meeting of all helpers for Saturday 18 March and will shortly inform everyone involved by letter.

We are still in discussion with Waveney DC to see if the adjoining empty flat can be used to enlarge and to benefit the Museum in Everitt's Park. Meanwhile, we will open as usual, but still need more support from members to act as stewards, as some of our long-standing stewards are not able to continue. We'll be pleased to receive any offers of assistance (it's not difficult and you'll be shown how it all works).

Tonight we welcome Tom Williamson to tell us about the Landscape History of the Somerleyton Estate.

With good wishes, **Lilian Fisher**

Ray Collins provides this update on "*The Reluctant Bishop*"

At my talk on Bishop Ryle last June, I said that I set out to discover where he lived in Lowestoft. I found this was Helmingham House, Kirkley Cliff Road but could not identify the house. Terry Weatherley tells me he found reference to it as number 58, a house which is still standing. When Ryle lived there, he would have had a clear view of the sea. In further research I also found that he was a principal patron for the extension to Christ Church School, adding the easterly two-storey block. The later building can clearly be seen in the brickwork. It is now used as the church halls.

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

Don't worry if spelling is not your strong point, we can help out.

Details of recent talks appear overleaf

12 January 2006, "What William Butterfield did for us" – by Terry Weatherley

(incorporating amended details of Thomas Garneys' monument and Princess Murat)

Terry told us how William Butterfield, born 1814, the son of a chemist, grew up to become an architect with a particular interest in churches. By the 1840s the revival high-Gothic style was popular, with its heavy décor and elaborate carvings, and was used for new and restored churches. However, not all parishes were style conscious and William Butterfield was given a supervisory position in an attempt to ensure consistent design standards were applied. His work, over many years, took him to a number of countries, also to London and to many areas of the UK. In the late 1800s, towards the end of his career, he restored Ellough and, slightly later, Ringsfield churches, near Beccles. Both churches have a number of interior items, including lectern, font and floor and wall tiling, where typical Butterfield design and colour is clearly seen. These may be compared to similar features of his in the splendid All Saints Church, St Margaret Street, London.

Churches were mostly built on hills, but that at Ringsfield is in a valley and beside a brook. This makes it liable to periodic flooding and probably caused deterioration of the fabric down the centuries (Suckling [1845] reported the church records were lost this way). Not many early records are available but it is known that John Wrawe was Vicar of Ringsfield in 1381, at the time of the Peasant's Revolt. In 1450, Peter Garneys left money for windows and a part rebuild including the steeple. In 1599, Robert Shelford also provided money, saying it was only possible because he never married. A screen decorated with a series of heads was added at this time. The outside porch, with crow-step gables, is another early feature. Dowsing toured East Anglia, ordering the removal of decorations from church interiors, but curiously the painted ceiling celestial scenes were left to feature in an 1818 sketch by Elisha Davy.

In the 1849 vestry minutes the archdeacon recommended a slate roof be provided, but was outvoted as it stayed as thatch. Before Butterfield's restoration, Ringsfield had high box-pews, an aisle gate, oak rafters and a gallery

on the porch side. The late 1800s restoration saw a significant extension to the chancel, repositioning of the pulpit and a new organ loft, but only pine rafters in the extension. There are a number of interesting monuments; one, outside the chancel, pictures a mermaid and is dedicated to Thomas Garneys in recognition of his saving Mary, the sister of Henry VIII, from drowning; nearby is another ancient brass dedicated to a Nicholas Garneys. A stone monument for Nicholas Gosling shows a skull and crossbones (nothing to do with pirates). A beautifully carved angel tops the grave of Princess Caroline Murat (grand-daughter of the King of Naples). She married John Garden of nearby Redisham Hall. There is some Bell and Beckham stained glass, using the colour schemes so favoured by Butterfield, and his design influence is also evident in the chalice made by Hart Son Peard & Co of London. William Butterfield died in 1900, a short time after the restoration work was completed.

The roof ridge-thatch was repaired in 2005, making the church very attractive, and the churchyard is now managed as part wildlife sanctuary.

26 January 2006, "Howard Hollingsworth, Lowestoft's first Freeman" – by Colin Dixon

Colin Dixon gave the story of one of Lowestoft's important benefactors. Howard's father, Charles, a successful bacon curer from Bilston, Staffs, ensured Howard (born 1871) received a good education – first in Edgbaston, then at college in Taunton, Somerset. Starting out as apprentice in a drapery store, he was ill-used by the management, was served bad food and forced to live in a rat-infested basement. He soon moved to London where he met Walter W Bourne, son of a farmer, who worked as a buyer for the well-known Pontings store. They became firm friends and with £600 capital, borrowed from relatives, set up the first Bourne & Hollingsworth store in Westbourne Grove. Howard married Walter's sister, Louisa, and in the ensuing years the business thrived, moving into larger premises. In 1902 they were able to purchase a much bigger store at 116–18 Oxford Street. From then until 1908 business really took off and they gradually purchased and rebuilt the entire block. By 1925 it offered the best quality fashion goods, served by smart, well-trained staff (mainly female) within a very spacious and stylish 320,000 sq ft store, whose name was advertised nationwide.

Walter Bourne had died in 1921, aged 56, but two of his three sons joined the business as directors. Howard, who never married, encouraged and supported them and the store continued to lead the field. Escalators and lifts were installed, a dining room and rest area, and floorwalkers ensured customers received excellent service. Howard, perhaps remembering his own introduction to work, made sure the B&H employees had the best conditions. His unique Staffordshire House company hostel was sold in 1911 and its successor, the larger Warwickshire House, provided good meals and rooms for up to 600 female staff close to the store. Another innovation was producing own-brand labelled goods in a company factory behind the store.

Howard was now a well-off and widely travelled businessman. During a visit to Lowestoft he bought the burned-out shell of *Briar Clyffe*, with its large grounds, on Gunton Cliff. Loving the unrestricted view of the sea, he rebuilt and enlarged the house where he could now live in style. Seven staff maintained the magnificent gardens and hothouses. Although he did not shoot, he purchased the duck decoy and estate at Barnby Broad to entertain his friends. As a bachelor, he indulged himself in cars and speedboats, collaborating with JW Brooke who built cars and marine engines in Lowestoft, and Howard's Brooke-engined boats appeared as far away as Monte Carlo. The wherry *Ardea* (recently brought back to the Broads for restoration) was commissioned by him in 1927, from Leo Robinson the Oulton Broad boatbuilders. A guest at the launching was his close friend Nicholas (Henry) Everitt who lived at Broad House, Oulton Broad. After Everitt's death, Howard Hollingsworth purchased his friend's estate and presented it to Lowestoft to be used as a public park, in perpetuity. In 1928, as a thank you gesture, Lowestoft made him the first Freeman of the Borough, presenting him with a scroll in a silver casket (still treasured by the family). The park, named in memory of Nicholas Everitt, opened with great celebrations in June 1929. Remembered for his generosity to many local causes (he once paid for all the furniture to equip the new nurses home at Lowestoft Hospital) Howard died in 1938. His ashes were scattered at sea, in sight of his beloved *Briar Clyffe* home, from the sailing smack *Telesia* which he had earlier restored for the 1935 Silver Jubilee celebrations.