

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

NEWSLETTER

Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

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What's On

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)

25 May 2006 Annual General Meeting

8 June 2006 Special Event

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**

A '**Societies Day**', which is organised by the Suffolk Local History Council, will take place on Sat 18 March at Mendlesham Community Centre. During the morning session there will be a series of 15-minute talks by speakers from various Suffolk Groups. These start at 9.55am and finish at 12.45pm. All members are welcome to attend, but please be there in advance of the 9.55 start. During the afternoon session, which will be between 2pm and 4.30pm, several societies, including our own, will have displays. Tea will be available at 11.00–11.30am and at 3pm in the afternoon. Provide your own lunch.

Note: All Society members are welcome to attend for the whole day or just the afternoon session.

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

9 February, 2006 "The Landscape History of the Somerleyton Estate" – by Tom Williamson

Tom Williamson, UEA Landscape Historian, explained how the Park had developed over several centuries, at one time covering most of the half-hundred of Lothingland.

The early history is not well documented but Sir John Wentworth, a Royalist, owned the Estate at the start of the 1600s and rebuilt the Hall in Jacobean style c1606–10. The garden planner, William Edge-Rainham is known to have visited Somerleyton in 1619 when looking for inspiration. He found landscaped gardens there including a banqueting hall, an orchard, an image park, carvings and statues, stretching away from the house. Traces of these could be seen on a contemporary map of the area shown to the meeting. The outskirts of the Estate also included marshes and common land extending to Flixton and Blundeston with isolated leisure gardens, fishing places and decoys, the latter being shown on the particularly interesting Flixton map of 1652. By the 1650s the Garneys family were in residence to be followed considerably later by the Anguishes. The Revd George Anguish died without issue in 1843, bequeathing the Estate to his sister's son, Sidney Godolphin Osborne. He put the Estate on the market in 1844 and Morton Peto secured it at public auction for £86,000. It was after this energetic Norwich businessman purchased it that the landscape we know today was shaped.

Samuel Morton Peto had prodigious energy with many sides to his career at this time. Principal were his interests in developing the Somerleyton Estate and 'model village', but he was also involved with expanding railways from East Anglia to other parts of England, including sub-contracts for IK Brunel, plus major rail projects abroad. Then there was the development of Lowestoft as an important fishing port, with extensive new harbours, and simultaneously as an important holiday resort, both made possible by the improved rail links he had engineered.

In typical fashion, he set out not only to improve the Estate's landscaping, but to rebuild and extend the Hall at the same time. William Andrews Nesfield, a talented and widely-used professional, was contracted to lay out the grounds, while John Thomas, of equal talent, rebuilt the Hall around the Jacobean core to produce an Italianate style home for Peto – being mostly what we see today. The grounds created by Nesfield had his trade mark features, viewed from the Hall, of parterre gardens (loosely based on the French style) with topiary and geometric patterning of shrubs and plants, plus an elevated terrace overlooking a bow-shaped area. In front of the Hall was an arboretum with winding paths leading to very extensive kitchen gardens, with hot and cold-houses at one side, plus the still-surviving and beautifully maintained maze. The Hall enjoyed superb views across to the fairly open surrounding park. The landowners in those days seemed very well connected and able to take in extra land when it became available, also to close existing roads or change their route, almost at will. Thomas was also responsible for setting out the 'model village' of Somerleyton with its school and houses, built in a variety of styles, around a central green. This took up part of the old common, which had been reduced by the Enclosure Acts of 1810, the original village being somewhat further from the Hall.

23 February, 2006, "Tönning, and Tonning Street" – by Hans Boje

Hans Boje, from the Port of Lowestoft Research Society, told members how several Lowestoft streets just north of Lake Lothing, starting with Tonning Street, came to be given names linked to the Continent.

Hans Boje explained he was born close to Tönning, which is a port at the mouth of the River Eider, in Schleswig Holstein, on the west coast of Germany near the border with Denmark and is surrounded by fertile cattle farming country. Nowadays, Tönning is an attractive town with excellent moorings and facilities for boat users, and a welcome for tourists, but in the past had thriving and profitable links with Lowestoft through Morton Peto's work.

Hans gave a brief history of Tönning, and how it was brought into commercial use due to the English blockade of the River Elbe, set up to prevent sea trade, in 1803. Goods meant for Hamburg, Bremen and places further inland had to be re-routed via Tönning. By 1809 there were also sea imports from the USA and a large warehouse, the Packhaus (now a popular museum) was built for storage of goods, but in general trade was on a moderate level. All this changed in 1840 when the British abolished import duties and opened up trade with the Continent. Records show 100 oxen were exported from Tönning to London (then a 3-day sea trip) in August 1846, the first of 1100 cattle sent that year. Soon, the Schleswig Holstein traders took note of Samuel Morton Peto's excellent new harbour at Lowestoft, which was supported by good rail links. The shorter sea trip to the Suffolk port was obviously beneficial for both cattle and traders and in 1851 the steamer *Prince* brought the first 164 animals from Brake, near Bremerhaven, to Lowestoft for redistribution by rail.

Meanwhile, in 1850, the Railway Company in Lowestoft had auctioned off surplus land for housing, north of their line from the Central station. This was partitioned into what, by 1854, became Denmark Road, Tonning, Flensburgh and Trafalgar Streets, all owing their names to Peto and the large and profitable trade Lowestoft had formed with the Continent in the mid-1800s. There are some houses which may still be identified from this early building phase, although the one-way road system has now divided the area .

Morton Peto, in a reverse trading move, had contracted to build a railway from the harbour at Tönning to Flensburg, effectively linking the German Ocean (North Sea) to the Baltic. The line opened in 1854, with locomotives supplied by the company of Peto, Brassey and Betts (who with great industry had simultaneously constructed a new gasworks at Flensburg). More animals and other goods could now be exported from further inland. When Lowestoft's timber-walled dock came into operation in 1856, the first vessel to unload was the *Hamburg*. The livestock trade increased dramatically and by the 1870s, Husum, a town with a big market, exported an annual figure of some 46,000 cattle and 50,000 sheep through Tönning. In 1875 the Tönning Steamship Co. built the *Kiel*, a steamer with the latest animal water and feed facilities and capable of reaching Lowestoft in just 30 hours, this also boosted commercial trade. Sadly, the cattle trade was ruined by the opening of the Kiel Canal in 1895 and quickly died out. Today, Tönning's main links with the sea are connected with navigation matters, buoy-laying and maintenance and sea safety. There is also a fairly low level inshore fishing industry and one remaining ship-building company.