

# Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

## NEWSLETTER

Society website: [www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk](http://www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk)

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#### What's On

**SUMMER BREAK – from 8 June to 7 September**

Please note that the first meeting in September will be on the FIRST Thursday (7 September) and NOT the second Thursday.

A copy of the full programme will be sent to all members during August.

**7 September 2006 "Development of the Saxon state in East Anglia" by Andy Hutcheson**

**28 September "Norfolk villages lost to the sea" by Chris Weston**

**12 October "Suffolk's Ancient Woodland" by Simon Leatherdale**

**26 October "The Optical Telegraph, London to Great Yarmouth" by Bernard Ambrose**

**9 November "Bombs, beams and boffins – the secret site at Orford Ness" by Paddy Heazell**

**23 November "The History of the Lowestoft and East Suffolk Marine Society" by Peter Parker**

**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*

As Lilian has been on holiday there will not be a Chairman's Report this month.

## **We need your help.**

Would you like to become a committee member? We need three more people to make up our numbers. There are four meetings a year where we discuss and decide all issues relating to the Society. The meetings are informal and you can be an ordinary member without any official position.

If you are interested, or would like more information on committee activities, then please contact the Society's Secretary, Irene Ashman, at 1 Cranfield Close, Pakefield, Lowestoft, NR33 7EL.

## **Please hand in any items you have for inclusion in the Newsletter at the Society meetings.**

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

## **Details of recent talks appear overleaf**

### **27 April 2006 "The Yarmouth Story: 1000 years of history" by Colin Tooke**

Colin Tooke presented a very interesting talk, with slides, on the changing story and development of Gt Yarmouth.

The town is built on a sandbank that had formed at the mouth of an estuary since Roman times. The only part remaining of this large estuary is Breydon Water. Nobody knows when the sandbank was first inhabited, but it is thought to be around the year 1000. It is believed that the town started in the area near to where the church of St Nicholas, built in 1101, now stands. Between the church and the river is Fullers Hill, which is where the settlers made their homes. Close by is the road named The Conge, which is a unique name and could relate to a bend in the river or a place where tolls were collected. Within the next 200 years the town grew to the south of Fullers Hill with St Nicholas as the parish church. It is supposed to be the largest parish church in England but the small windows in the tower are the only parts of the original Norman church remaining.

The town was built on what was a narrow strip of land (sandbank) in a north – south direction, with three main roads following the curve of the river. Narrow lanes, or rows, divided the town east-west between the three roads.

In 1261, King Henry III gave permission to build a town wall, the building of which started in 1285 and took about 100 years to complete. There were 10 gates, the main ones being the South Gate and the North Gate, with 18 towers and turrets. Outside the gates stood 5 windmills and the towns freshwater wells.

A moat was dug around the northern part of the wall with another around the southern part of the wall, but these were not joined. One gate was named the Pudding Gate after the part of the moat where the butchers threw their waste, which was called 'pudding'. The butchers occupied the area to the east of the market place which was called the 'Shambles'. (where Argos and Co-op have shops today). Fish was sold in another part of the market.

Up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the town was confined to within the walled area, therefore as the need for more housing arose this resulted in the close building of homes in the narrow rows. The original strips of land had a house at each end, then the land between was built on. Cows were kept in some of the buildings and others were used as fish houses. Special narrow carts, pulled by a single horse called 'Troll Carts', were used to move goods through the rows. Some home owners installed wooden buffers to their properties to protect them from damage

from the carts. Some of the rows had large houses which were sub-divided into tenements. Due to the closeness of the buildings, the town was said to be quite gloomy.

There were 145 rows, but few remain today. The rows were subject to much damage due to bombing raids and from being used for military training in World War II.

During the Medieval Period the town was home to the Whitefriars, Greyfriars and the Blackfriars. The only remains today are part of the Greyfriars buildings that are preserved in the centre of the town. By this period the town had become prosperous mainly due to the herring fishing. The town coat of arms displayed three herring until the early 14<sup>th</sup> century when the King granted the use of the royal lion heads on top of the herrings. This was in recognition of the supply to the King of many ships and men, in fact more than any other town in the country. Later that century about 7,000 of the 10,000 population were lost from the plague, or Black Death.

The middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the development of the new 'healthy' pastime of bathing in seawater (and drinking it), which led in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the town changing to accommodate holidaymakers.

Much of the town wall remains today due to the fact that it has been incorporated into later buildings, particularly by the Victorians. Subsequent demolition of these buildings has revealed sections of the wall.