

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

NEWSLETTER

Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

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What's On

26 April 2007 "The English Garden" by Paul Scriven

From the Formal to the Informal – a brief history of what constitutes an English Garden

10 May 2007 "Norfolk & Norwich in The Great War" by Peter and Rosemary Salt

Pictures of everyday life from 1909 to 1923 and changes brought about by the Great War

24 May 2007 "Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society – Annual General Meeting"

All Members of the Society are invited to attend

14 June 2007 "A Members Outing to the National Trust Site at Orford Ness"

Check with Ray Collins (01502 574626) for vacancies for this popular excursion

28 June 2007 "An evening visit to two local churches" led by Terry Weatherley (see details below)

Members will be able to book a pub supper to follow the church visits.

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

Our Broad House Museum re-opened for the season on Monday 2nd April, and we are looking forward to a busy time. However, obeying the new regulations, we need to have two people on duty together, and unfortunately, this has meant we cannot open for as long as has always been our custom. Our new hours are from 1.30 pm to 4.30 pm each day and we hope this works successfully.

South Lowestoft Methodist Church, where we hold our meetings in the hall, are to hold their AGM on 19th April. Ron, Irene and I are planning to be there to represent the Archaeological Society's interests. Our own AGM is, of course, on 24th May and we would like to see as many members as possible attending. Note that our Annual Church Outing details (and supper at the Norman Warrior) on 28th June are now confirmed (see Myra's notes below). Before that however, on 14th June, is our outing to Orford Ness. These should both be most interesting visits.

This evening, Paul Scriven will tell us all about *The English Garden*.

With good wishes, **Lilian Fisher**

**CHURCH OUTING: Led by Terry Weatherley – meeting 7 pm on Thursday 28 June,
at Our Lady
Star of the Sea, Gordon Road, Lowestoft, and continuing at St Margaret's Church,
Lowestoft**

Supper has been booked for 8.15 pm at The Norman Warrior (corner of Oulton Road and Fir Lane). No need to book for the church outing, but add your name to the list by the meeting of 10 May latest if you are joining us for supper. Please take a menu when you have added your name.
Menu choices are required by 14 June latest.

DETAILS OF RECENT TALKS – these continue overleaf:

8 March 2007, "The History of Easter" – by Katrina Siliprandi

Katrina, from the Education Department of Norwich Castle Museum, first gave a general explanation of this traditional ceremony, which appears in many countries across the world, and has existed for many centuries in various forms. She went on to reveal the mystery of the shifting dates allocated to Easter in the Western Church. This Moveable Feast always takes place on the Sunday following the first full moon to appear after the spring equinox. Immediately preceding Easter are the 40 weekdays of Lent starting with Ash Wednesday, a time which in the Christian Church is devoted to abstinence and fasting, in commemoration of Christ's fasting in the wilderness.

In earlier centuries the four or five days before Ash Wednesday often took the form of a feast, which used up perishable foodstuffs, the Monday could feature eggs and collops (bacon), then came Shrove Tuesday with pancakes, the family possibly being called by the church bells to be shriven and absolved by the priest before they consumed the last of the pre-Lenten treats.

There were endless local customs to do with Easter. In Scotland, wheaten cakes (bannocks) replaced pancakes. The first public pancake race is said to have been run in Church Lane, Olney (Bucks). In some villages after a race the frying pans would be placed in a circle around the church font while the competitors went to worship. The first pancake could be saved and given back to the fowls or used in special ceremonies. Other entertainments on the day might include cock thrashing, where a local had a cockerel and bells tied to their back. Competitors paid a fee and were blindfolded before they tried to locate the mobile cockerel and strike it with a stick, the bird's carrier receiving the fees as a reward at the end of the game. On Ash Wednesday, children in Hants and Sussex picked ash twigs with black buds and played a toe-stamping game. On Mothering Sunday (the fourth Sunday of Lent) girl children who had left home often returned to visit their mothers bringing the gift of a simnel cake, which was both boiled and baked. Liquorice or figs were commonly eaten on Palm Sunday (Fig Sunday) a week before Easter.

The Thursday of Easter Week (Maundy Thursday) where the ruling monarch originally washed the feet of chosen parishioners, is celebrated today with specially minted Maundy money. Good Friday customs varied across the country with water, fire, bread and, of course, hot cross buns all providing good luck if used in the right way. Marbles was played on Good Friday and 'long rope day' was celebrated by skipping on the beach at Brighton and elsewhere in Sussex. People were encouraged to wear 'something new' on Easter Sunday.

The egg was known as a symbol of resurrection and fertility from the ancient worlds of Egypt and China. Egg dances take place in many countries and egg hunts became very popular in the UK from the 17th century. Since the Middle Ages eggs have traditionally been finished in bright colours with fancy, often gilt, decoration. Sometimes hens eggs were painted or dyed by families whose members all took part in the experience. The Victorian gift eggs were usually of cardboard or tin-plate, in two halves, with an elaborately colour-printed covering and were filled with chocolates or sweets. Commercial manufacturers produced the first chocolate eggs in the 1870s. In Germany is found the egg tree, where a small tree is decorated with eggs made from wood or blown glass. And for those who have everything, there is always Fabergé.

**22 March 2007, "The Archaeological Excavations at Bloodmoor Hill" – by Alison
Dickens**

This was the long awaited final report of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit. Alison deserves great credit for delivering a concise, well illustrated, easily flowing and extremely interesting précis of what has been a very large and important project. Fieldwork on the 3 hectare site (funded by the land developers) was carried out between 1996 and 2001, and post-fieldwork (funded by English Heritage) has occupied the last six years.

The 1996 excavation found the western part of a Saxon settlement was overlying a Roman site that had been occupied in the 2nd and 3rd century AD. It was a minor rural settlement served by a ditched and banked trackway. A Saxon barrow was excavated nearby in 1758. Bloodmoor Hill, occupied from the 5th to the 8th century, is the most easterly Saxon site in the country and positioned where the parishes of Pakefield, Carlton Colville and Gisleham meet, on a slight rise on sandy soil a little east of the Kirkley stream. A mixture of techniques was employed after stripping the topsoil, including metal detecting, geophysics, trowelling and sieving, with cleaning of artefacts carried out on site; most important was the accurate recording of all stages.

It quickly became clear that this was a very important site, having 38 varied examples of Grubenhäuser and more than 10 post-built structures; also 270 pits, many of which were overlapping, plus a very rare cemetery with east/west burials grouped into four clear stages of use. There were also many middens of large area that were sampled in metre squares to determine their contents. The pits and houses contained a wealth of small finds and the Cambridge investigators adopted the most recent methods of dating and testing these, including radio-carbon dating the residue preserved within cooking vessels. The population of Bloodmoor was probably not more than 25–30 people at any one time and spanned approximately five generations. Buildings from the second phase of occupation were more tightly grouped than from the first and the main cemetery was almost centrally positioned.

Finds included body ornaments, food utensils and both single- and double-sided bone combs of high quality. There were remains of Anglo-Saxon glass palm pots and claw beakers, plus imported cult items in silver, pointing to the existence of trade links. The site status is also important because traces of iron and copper-working were found, remains of 54 knives, a pot hook, a cleaver and other hooks, nails and wire being collected. Weaving must have been part of the daily round as loom weights and very rare evidence of textile fragments were recovered from graves. Traces of barley, rye, wheat, flax and beans were excavated, also crab apples, sloes and local reed. Strangely, for a site near the coast, fish did not feature in any quantity. Food may have been traded in – animal bones were mainly of pigs, some sheep, goats and horses (some butchered) and cattle. The last were mature, indicating their use for milk and leather, the younger meat was probably traded off-site.

The cemetery contained 28 graves (there were also two outliers 50 metres off, one a double burial) but soil conditions did not favour the preservation of bones, of which few remained. Grave goods included a silver necklace and cross (Christian period), remains of shears and hooks; also gold and glass decorative objects and an outstanding brooch of garnet and alloy, similar to one from Edix Hill, Cambridgeshire. The cemetery was in use for 20–50 years. The conclusion of the archaeologists was that the site was not just a village, but of high status with an organised layout and established social and trade links.

Would you like to join the Society's Committee? We need one more member to bring us up to full strength. We meet four times a year to discuss and decide all issues relating to the Society – Ring Irene Ashman 01502 586143.