

# Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

## NEWSLETTER

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

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## FEBRUARY 2007

### What's On

**8 February 2007 "Georgian Lowestoft – a pictorial tour" by Chris Brooks.** A slide show and talk by this local historian and Chairman of the Jack Rose Old Lowestoft Society

**22 February 2007 "The Lost Houses of Suffolk" by Alan Mackley**  
Alan, historian and author, will speak on his special interest in old country houses

**8 March 2007 "The History of Easter" by Katrina Siliprandi**  
Katrina represents the Education Department of Norwich Castle Museum

**22 March 2007 "The Archaeological Excavations at Bloodmoor Hill" by Alison Dickins**  
A final report by the Cambridge Archaeological Unit is due about this time

**26 April 2007 "The English Garden" by Paul Scriven.** From the Formal to the Informal – a brief history of what constitutes an English Garden

**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

At our meeting on 25th January, Bill Richmond came to tell us all about Gorleston and the National Coastwatch Institution (NCI), which is a very vigilant organisation.

Our Museum in Broad House Museum is preparing to reopen on Monday 2nd April, which is the beginning of Easter Week. I shall be arranging a meeting of all the stewards and helpers, to take place probably on Saturday 24th March. We would welcome anyone who would like to help in any way at the Museum.

In early summer there will be the guided visit to Orford Ness, on 14th June, and we are also arranging a church visit on Thursday evening, 28th June. The latter will be led by Terry Weatherley. At the moment we do not know which churches Terry will choose for us to visit, but will pass on the information as soon as we can.

This evening, Chris Brooks will tell us all about Georgian Lowestoft – a pictorial tour.

With best wishes, **Lilian Fisher**

### **A Visit to Orford Ness:**

As a follow-up to Paddy Heazell's talk given on 9th November (see summary in the January 2007 Newsletter) Ray Collins is making arrangements for a group of members to visit the National Trust site at Orford Ness. This will be a half-day visit on 14th June, taking a maximum of 24 people, and will be led by a guide. Places may be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. The per-person cost is £9.50 for National Trust members or £11.50 for other visitors, which includes the short ferry crossing to the point and some trailer transport to separate areas within the site. Footwear should allow for the shingle and varied surface of the coastal spit.

Some Society members are prepared to offer lifts to Orford to help those without their own transport, and also to keep the number of cars to a minimum. This must be arranged in good time. Members are asked to take their own refreshments. The tour begins about 11 am and lasts approximately three hours.

**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**

#### **11 January 2007, "That's Odd! The story of Rushmere Church" – by Terry Weatherley**

Terry started his talk by looking at different buildings, the features that indicate their date of construction, and signs of alterations. He then showed features in different churches that indicated where changes had been made. These include marks left in walls where windows, doorways or archways had been filled in or where the roof level had been altered. Windows were often moved, enlarged or altered in shape. The Victorians were also very good at producing copies of earlier designs of window.

The parish of Rushmere is small and in Domesday was valued at 5 shillings and 300 herring. The tower has been constructed in three phases. A drawing of 1829 shows six lancet windows below the existing windows. Around the post-Norman door archway in the North wall there are signs of an earlier larger door. At the East end of the building the steep slope of the roof indicates that it was originally thatched. Other signs in the wall suggest that the roof has subsequently been raised. This wall also has a scratch dial, (a form of sundial) which has possibly been moved from the south wall. The unusual thing is it has been turned on its side.

There is a piece of graffiti on the porch door archway. The word Henry has been carved in the stonework, the date of this is possibly medieval. The porch is built of brick, which is supposed to be 17<sup>th</sup> century, although Terry thought the bricks looked more like 18<sup>th</sup> century.

On the north wall there is a sign of a relieving arch and in the south wall there are signs of two brick relieving arches. This poses the question of whether there had been an arcade on either side or could these be blind arcading.

The vote of thanks was given by Bill Goode, a founder member of the Society.

**25 January 2007, "Gorleston and the National Coastwatch Institution (NCI)" – by Bill Richmond**

National Coastwatch member, Bill Richmond, gave an entertaining talk on 25 January to explain the formation of this voluntary group. In 1990, the government decided that technology had advanced to the point where the traditional visual watch kept by the coastguards for so many years was obsolete. So the coastguard watch stations were closed and radar surveillance, backed by satellite weather reports, radio and global positioning technology, took over the task. No one in power was able to see that small boats suffering power loss or an engine failure would hardly show up on radar (especially if they were of the rib [inflatable] type) and would be unable to call for help. (There's no use sending up a flare if there are no visual watchers!) The loss of the visual watch service caused many worries.

Eventually, it was loss of life on the Cornish coast, in just these circumstances, which prompted people there to start up and fund their own replacement service, which was later to become Coastwatch. The system, matched in some places by the similar SSG (Sea Safety Group) has now spread from Cornwall along the south and up the east coast as far north as Hartlepool. All these small groups are voluntarily taking care of and funding (even down to their uniforms) what was previously government business. The duties at Gorleston are split into three, four-hour watches and cover from 8 am to 8 pm daily, involving a total team of around forty male and female volunteers.

The Gorleston group are housed in the original coastguard lookout at the end of Gorleston south pier head and are currently the only one based on a combined major river and port. All types of visiting craft are observed and recorded, from container ships and oil/gas platform supply vessels down to one-man fishing boats. Surprisingly, in excess of 10,000 boat movements per annum are recorded here.

The NCI visual watch cooperates with a number of official bodies, including search and rescue and the coastguards. They monitor local inshore traffic, keep watch on VHF distress channels – especially to relay any weak signals – they also assist coastguards with updates on weather/sea conditions, maintain a local radar watch, monitor pollution at sea and, where appropriate, cover coastal path walks. Other contacts are kept open with the RSPB and Nature Conservation and, occasionally, with HM Customs regarding unusual movements of people and boats.

Bill's talk was well illustrated, using charts to show the technical aspects of the coastline and harbour at Gorleston, including buoys and channels and Scroby Sands. Also included were photographs of vessels and varying sea states, plus aerial views of the river from its mouth up to Breydon Water, three miles inland. The lookout contains a variety of equipment for measuring tidal effects but Coastwatch staff use the upper level, where the balcony offers a good view from Caister Point in the north (itself the site of a lookout in the mid-1800s) down towards Lowestoft Ness Point in the south.

The watchroom desk is well equipped with barometer and wind recorder, two VHF radios and powerful binoculars. Behind this there is a computerised chartroom. Staff are regularly

tested and trained to ensure they can provide accurate written records to back up their observations. One vital skill is to assess the distance and direction of any vessel from the lookout station. This enables any search and rescue operation, whether using lifeboat or helicopter, to get to the exact spot without delay – an essential element in their main aim of saving life at sea.

The vote of thanks was given by Ray Collins, treasurer.