

# Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

## NEWSLETTER

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

Volume 35 Number 6

### MARCH 2007

#### What's On

**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

**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

**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*

#### A note from the Committee

Our chairman has been away during the preparation of this issue. However, the Committee would like to repeat the message she gave at the last meeting, concerning the need for extra stewards at the Broad House Museum. It is vitally important that more help is provided during the season, particularly at weekends, so that we are able to have a minimum of two people present to supervise and assist visitors. Please help us and, if you can, persuade a friend to join you. We don't want to lose the Museum through lack of support.

Our Museum in Broad House is preparing to reopen on Monday 2nd April, which is the beginning of Easter Week. A meeting of all current stewards and helpers is to take place at 10am on Saturday 24th March in the Bowls Pavilion. Additional people who would like to help in any way at the Museum are welcome (it's not difficult and you'll be shown how it works by the existing stewards). Please ask the chairman for details.

This evening, Katrina Siliprandi from Norwich Castle Museum will tell us about *The History of Easter*.

## **The Outing to Orford Ness on 14th June:**

We are at present fully booked to the maximum 24 that we can take to Orford. It should be a very good day as we shall have the island to ourselves, and Paddy Heazell for our guide. If you missed Paddy's talk to the Society in November, see the January Newsletter for some details of the site's history.

Places are on a first-come, first-served basis with preference given to members and a companion. After 26th April, any spare places may be offered to family/friends. Names for these can be given to Ray Collins now but these will not be confirmed until the end of April. The per-person cost is £9.50 for National Trust members or £11.50 for other visitors. It would be nice to also take a collection (suggest 50p per person) so that we could provide a book token for our volunteer guide. We must arrive at Orford by 11am and will take a short boat trip to the island, where a tractor and trailer will carry us to the points of interest. The only facilities on site are the toilets, so you will need to bring food and drink, also suitable clothing and footwear for this exposed coastal situation. We leave the island at about 2pm. We will work out car sharing where possible. For other queries please contact me at the meetings or by telephone: 01502 574626 – Ray Collins.

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

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

#### **8 February 2007, "Georgian Lowestoft – a pictorial tour" – by Chris Brooks**

Chris Brooks, Chairman of the Jack Rose Old Lowestoft Society, treated the weather-depleted audience to a fascinating look at the town in Georgian times. Lowestoft in the 1700s supported a population of approximately 2000 and covered only a fraction of today's town. Using current landmarks, it stretched from Hamilton Road in the south to Links Road in the north, and westward to St Margaret's church. Since before the time of Nelson's visit there had been organised defences for the town. A fortified battery with thirteen cannon was positioned at the point called 'South End', later Battery Green. Smaller examples covered the north and east frontages.

At this time there was no harbour and no main route into town from the south, Pakefield being well separated from Lowestoft by rough, undeveloped land – Lake Lothing was still a lake. The main access was from Oulton, with visitors passing between spacious greens and finally arriving in the High Street via Bell Lane. Occupations within town would have been varied, including tradespeople supplying the householders' needs; the brewing trade; farming; transport, with its associated wheelwrights and blacksmiths, and millers would have been represented.

There would also have been carpenters and leather workers and, no doubt, shipbuilders serving the fishing industry and coastal-trading seamen. These marine trades worked direct off the beach, there being no docks or quay-headings available, only the guidance system of high and low lights for their safety. Moving goods by sea was probably more reliable than trusting to the unmetalled roads and the horse-drawn or bullock carts of the 18th century, particularly during the winter period.

But in the mid-1750s a new trade emerged. To the north of town, at Gunton Cliff, a local businessman discovered clay that turned out to be suitable for making good quality porcelain. Clay washing and settlement beds were established near the Warren Cottages on the Denes, a kiln was set up in Factory Street and by 1760 Lowestoft porcelain was being sold and advertised through London agents. Skilled potters and decorators lived and worked in the adjoining area and the company produced a great variety of both blue and polychrome glazed pieces until about 1800, when the business closed. Today, the best examples command very high prices.

The Lowestoft porcelain collection moved to Broad House Museum in Oulton Broad in 1985 and is open to the public during the summer season. The porcelain factory was converted to a brewery by E & G Morse and used for more than a century. In 1902/3 a local enthusiast excavated beneath the building and uncovered a large amount of pottery fragments, wasters and moulds.

Timber-framed buildings began to be replaced by those of brick in Georgian times. A number of the wealthier merchants in town had homes built on the east side of the High Street overlooking the sea, with 'hanging gardens' running down the slope to the beach level. The Georgian style is visible in houses in the Town Hall area and a few of them retain their vaulted storage cellars. Buildings of special note include the old tithe barn off Factory Street, both north and south Flint Houses, the ancient house north of Rant Score, with its traces of a jettied front, and Wilde's School, the remaining part of which now contains the Lowestoft Heritage Centre.

## **22 February 2007, "The Lost Houses of Suffolk" – by Alan Mackley**

A general definition of the Country House is one large enough to have an estate, say 1,000 acres, and which can provide sufficient income to support the incumbents. An early survey of owners with 1 acre of land or more, revealed that there were only a few having estates over 20 acres; roughly 35% with 12–20 acres; another 35% having 5–12 acres and the balance made of relatively small lots. The owners derived several advantages, such as being able to display life-style and taste, hosting annual events and shoots, travelling abroad and entertaining their peers. Estate income from agriculture was supplemented by rents from their farms and other tenants.

For centuries the country estate owners had survived in a comfortable, feudal style, but they were to suffer a drop in income in the 1870s. Rents and wages collapsed due to the fall in value of English farm produce. This was caused by the large-scale import of cheap cereals and beef from the Americas. Tenant farmers could not find the rent and many families in smaller estates now also fell on hard times. The larger estates fared better and mostly had sufficient cash or holdings to keep going. Eleven estates of over 10–12,000 acres survived in Suffolk, but with only six of their houses. At this time, many land-workers in Suffolk moved to the booming herring fishing industry and some to other local trades.

The task of caring for houses of note is undertaken today mainly by the National Trust, but this is a comparatively recent arrangement and the underlying strategies much different from those of their predecessors. In the 1930s, some groups stated ... 'It may not be that all old houses demolished were of sufficient worth to justify keeping them' .... Also, at that time, there was concern for the continuance of long-established families, seen as being an indivisible part of the Country House, and about 230 houses were listed. In 2004, CPRE recorded that during 1940, with war damage threatening, artists were chosen to paint and record views of what they considered to be the essence of English Heritage. Very surprisingly, there were no country houses selected!

Things had changed with the War and some of the more forward-looking families made their houses into schools and public buildings, but a number of suitable ones were requisitioned by the government for military use. Due to lack of funding many old houses were run down or lacking facilities, not having modern plumbing, drains and heating, so escaped the government's net. Locally, Earsham Hall was left due to its lack of services. At that time there was no obligation to notify a house was to be pulled down. Consequently, in the 1950s many country houses that had survived the blitz unscathed fell victim to demolition, then at its peak. In Suffolk alone 37 were destroyed.

Henham House, south of Lowestoft, designed by James Wyatt (to replace an earlier one burnt down in the 1790s) was pulled down in the 1950s, rents in the 1940s having fallen to half the value of one hundred years before, leaving the estate in financial trouble and reduced to 4,000 acres. The current Earl of Stradbroke, with the help of his family, runs the estate from his home in Australia and has put forward plans to build a modern hall.