

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

NEWSLETTER

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What's On in 2009

- 8 Jan 2009** **“John owes me sixpence!”** by Terry Weatherley – revelations from a diary of 1912 – another quite different topic presented by this familiar local speaker.
- 22 Jan 2009** **“How did that get there?”** and **“Not many people know that!”** by Ron Ashman – two items of local history from in and around Lowestoft.
- 12 Feb 2009** **“Second World War Defences on the Suffolk Coast”** by David Sims – David comes from the University of East Anglia
- 26 Feb 2009** **“Funding and Building Corton Village School (1894–95)”** by Don Friston and **“The Suffolk Coastline – nature and man (covering 700,000 years)”** by Keith Davies – two short illustrated talks on local history given by Society members.

Please ring bell if the door is locked

Chairman's Column

Tonight, we look forward to our first meeting of 2009. Terry Weatherley will tell us all about ‘**John owes me sixpence**’. Then, on 22 January, we welcome Ron Ashman with two short talks; ‘**How did that get there?**’ and ‘**Not many People know that!**’

Our Broad House Museum will re-open at Easter, and we shall be very glad if anyone will volunteer as a steward even if for one day. We need to have two on duty together daily from 1.30 until the museum closes at 4.30 pm.

We are looking forward to our meal at the Lowestoft College on Thursday, 5 February – 7.00 for 7.30 pm – and I need to let the College know just how many of us will be there. At the moment we have 35 names, but there may be more! The cost is £17.50 per head. Please put your name(s) on the list tonight if you wish to join us.

With all good wishes for the New Year!

Lilian Fisher

Details of recent talks:

3 November 2008

“The Garrett Family Business (to 1932)” – a talk by Frank Huxley.

Frank Huxley, Chairman of the Friends of the Long Shop Museum, spoke about the history of Garretts of Leiston and the Garrett family. He explained that the company started as

gunsmiths and bladesmiths (specialising in agricultural hand tools) at Woodbridge in the mid 1700s. After a move to Leiston in 1778 they expanded their range of agricultural products against local competition, starting to supply ploughs, reapers, seed drills, harrows, beet and chaff cutters. In 1805, one of several sons named Richard, took over the business and soon, through a family introduction to John Ball, of Hetherset, in Norfolk, Garretts began to manufacture threshing drums. By 1830 they were also producing cast- and wrought-iron railings and signs, gates, stoves and road bridges, some of which remain in use today. Soon the work force increased from 60 to 600 and the company house was erected, along with a power house and a range of factory buildings. In the early days raw materials and coal were imported and goods despatched through Slaughden Quay at Aldeburgh, carried by the company's own schooners. Portable steam engines were made in the late 1840s, and the third son called Richard acted as one of the guarantors for the 1851 Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace at London's Hyde Park, where Garretts had a stand. At this time the first self-propelled Garrett steam engine was produced, and Richard Garrett met Samuel Colt the American inventor. Colt made firearms on a production line and Garrett realised the same system could be applied at Leiston. By 1852 (some 55 years before Henry Ford) the Long Shop flow line was in operation, eventually turning out one completed steam engine every working day. These formed part of a threshing set (engine, drum and elevator), a combination that was the mainstay of company sales at home and abroad for many years.

The Garrett family enjoyed the social scene in London, where they owned the Camden Brewery and were involved in the Royal Agricultural Society. Richard Garrett was a JP and Deputy Lieutenant of Suffolk, where he put up £500 to support a new school (later named Framlingham College). Meanwhile Newson Garrett had left Leiston and worked in pawn broking in Long Acre, London. In 1840 he returned to Leiston, then moved to Aldeburgh. Now wealthy, he bought Snape Bridge Quay and erected the Maltings, and afterwards a number of major developments within Aldeburgh, including the Gas Works and Railway Station. Newson became Mayor of Aldeburgh and among his 11 children were two sisters destined for fame – his eldest daughter married and became Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the country's first female physician, being elected to the BMA in 1873. Elizabeth was a strong supporter of her married sister Millicent Fawcett who was elected leader of the National Union of Women's Suffrage (NUWS) around 1897, prior to Emmeline Pankhurst founding her breakaway Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in the north, in 1903.

The late 1800s brought a deep depression in agriculture. Garretts cut their personnel to about 400 and concentrated on selling only threshing machines, seed drills and winding engines, but by the turn of the century were able to re-introduce traction engines, steam rollers and steam tractors, and expand again. A few motorised Crawley ploughs were made before and after WWI but the latter brought disruption through the loss of key workers. After 1915, women came into the factory (to help produce 7,000 shell cases per week) and the work force was increased to over 2,000. Two hundred FE2B pusher bi-planes were also built for the war effort. The Russian Revolution dealt the company a severe blow as all foreign debts were cancelled – Garretts lost £250,000, a fortune at that time. The steam lorry had appeared and steam farm tractors also, but development of both was prevented by the war and very few produced. One successful post-war line was the electric vehicle. Over 60 refuse lorries were supplied to Glasgow Corporation and 120 trolleybuses produced, including some used in Ipswich. Sadly other ventures such as the first diesel farm tractor (too costly) and the diesel lorry (with unreliable Blackstone engine) failed to attract business. The company struggled to cope against their competitors and closed up in 1932. The Long Shop Museum in the

remaining factory building tells a wonderful story and features examples of many Garrett products.

27 November 2008

Suffolk Archaeological Service – by Jon Newman.

Jon Newman, who is from the Contract section of Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, spoke about recent work they had carried out in the county. Since 1990 there have been strict controls on developers, designed to protect the area's historic heritage sites and buildings. Developers of sites large and small now contribute proportionately to the cost of surveys and agree time limits that allow the county team to list, and where possible, conserve artefacts before clearance and building commences. Recent trends have created a demand for many conversions of barns and farm buildings (mostly unlisted and late 18th/early 19th century), or maltings, for housing. Nowadays, the team visits the site to take detailed written and digital photographic records of these buildings before any work starts. On excavation sites small artefacts can be removed to museums or storage while extant building features may be recorded and photographed but left in situ, suitably covered, for the archaeologists of the future – an underground kiln recently examined at Winston, near Debenham, is a typical example of the latter.

The 19th and 20th century cattle market at Bury St Edmunds, situated just outside the town defences, is currently being developed as a shopping centre. Much detail concerning the post-medieval worker's housing, and the market has been noted along the St Andrew's Street frontage – also the 19th century weighbridge excavated. Quantities of stone material used for developing this area probably came from the nearby Abbey buildings destroyed during the Reformation. The land extending beyond the cattle market was probably used for grazing animals and agriculture.

Further information had come on the causeway excavated on Beccles marshes, now positively dated to 75 BC – see the report by Keith Davies in the Society's Newsletter Volume 35/9 – and the earlier excavations at Bloodmoor Hill and Carlton Colville (probably Bronze Age). A second causeway has been located at Barsham Marshes during work to improve the banks of the river – this causeway runs from the river at an angle and ends at a gravel island in the marsh. It is of a similar type to that at Beccles. At Culford, near Bury, a sports area was being developed at the Cadogan family mansion when an early Bronze-Age beaker burial came to light.

Soil stripping at the extensive Flixton quarry (site of an Anglo-Saxon settlement) has revealed further ring ditches and burials systems. The county team has also excavated cellar pits, with post-hole at each end, and an Early Neolithic long barrow. In plan the latter is a ditched enclosure some 40 metres long by 15 metres wide and has additional features of post-holes and internal compartments. At Leiston, on the original abbey site, some preservation work has been done on the remaining walls of the small chapel – these were largely intact in 1786 but have become severely eroded over two centuries. Work continues in Ipswich at St Mary's Quay, the subject of our April talk, and more is planned on the two adjoining churchyard sites. During the evening the speaker produced some heavily encrusted Roman coins from a recent excavation near Corton church. The County Archaeological Service donated these to Lowestoft Museum at Broad House.

Jon explained that during the excavation of a low-lying field beside Hartismere High School, near Eye, required for a playing field, the team had discovered a Saxon settlement and cemetery, and Bronze-Age cremations. There were also large post-hole buildings, a possible pre-Roman longhouse, numerous animal bones, kiln slag (possibly from iron smelting) a Saxon silver pin and small gold fragments.

Note: Our Chairman has made arrangements with Lowestoft College for the Society's Annual meal.

This will be held on Thursday 5 February at 7.00 pm for a 7.30 start. From past experience, this venue offers extremely good value and competitive rates for excellent fare. Please make your reservation now with Lilian if you would like to attend. It is hoped we will have the menu by our next meeting

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