

# Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

## Volume 37 Number 7 – **NEWSLETTER** – OCTOBER 2009

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

### What's On in 2009/10

**8 Oct 2009 "Mishap and Misdemeanour in Kirkley Roads" by David Butcher** – entertaining tales of sea adventures from this well-known and popular local historian and author.

**22 Oct 2009 "Visit to Lowestoft Cine and Camcorder Club"** – members of the Cine and Camcorder Club present film of Lowestoft Town and Around – **Note special timing details overleaf!**

**12 Nov 2009 "A History of the Sparrow's Nest Theatre" by Brian Soloman** – the one-time amenities officer for Lowestoft has a wealth of entertaining stories on this subject.

**Most 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 Museum has been quite busy all through the summer months and is still open daily from 1.30–4.30 pm until the end of October, when it will close until next Spring. We shall meet in the Bowls Pavilion on Saturday 7 November at 11 am, for our annual get-together (with refreshments), when all stewards and helpers can exchange ideas and suggestions for the next season. I shall be sending out letters to all involved quite soon. Guy de Moubray, who lives at Buxlow Manor, spoke to us on 10 September telling of his life and time in the Army. Then, on 24 September, Rob Jarvis told us all about Lowestoft's Defences 1939–45. At Lowestoft Library on Friday 25 September, Ron Ashman was one of the speakers who each told of their own Society.

Tonight we welcome back David Butcher who will tell us about *Mishap and Misdemeanour in Kirkley Roads*.

With all good wishes **Lilian Fisher**

### **Details of recent events:**

#### **10 September 2009 – "Memoirs of a Suffolk Gentleman" – by Guy de Moubray**

A good turnout of members heard that Mr de Moubray's family connections may be traced to Roger de Moubray, Earl of Northumberland in the 12th century. Other relatives of the Earls of Arundel, moved into Suffolk and had family links (through marriage) with Roger de Bigod of Bungay Castle. A later Roger de Moubray went to the Crusades where he defeated a pagan adversary in single combat – his family became Dukes of Norfolk, and were the speaker's distant cousins, living in both Framlingham and Orford Castles at various times. Family members urged Guy, in later life, to write his own history. Born between the wars in Kuala Lumpur, of British parents working in the civil service, his first memories as a five-year-old were of being left in Belgium in 1930 (nominally to learn a language) in the care of a married but childless aunt, his parents going off on a further three-year tour of duty. Over the next fifteen years he saw his parents for brief meetings that totalled just eight months. Fortunately the aunt proved a loving and caring substitute parent during his education at three different schools. In this period a number of fellow students encouraged his talent for acting, in widely differing plays ranging from *"The Boy Friend"* to *"Samson & Agonistes"*.

War came then, and in 1942 his parents became POWs in Singapore. Guy, as a teenager, applied for a government scholarship to learn Japanese, following which (in 1944) he joined the army and was posted to Burma, employed there to keep a listening watch on Japanese radio messages. In January 1945, by then a sergeant, he nursed an ailing army truck some 1000 miles from Arakan to Calcutta, where on his very late arrival he was surprised to find his rank improved to Lieutenant. He was in Bombay when the A-bombs fell and managed to secure an express transfer to Rangoon to join the 5th Infantry, who were detailed to the relief of Singapore. On arrival by landing craft into a deserted harbour the relieving force approached the quay with great caution. Being first ashore, Guy had just secured the boat when a gate opened and a group of staff cars came out to offer lifts into the compound, but his cautious commanding officer decided they should walk to meet the surrendering force and cheering prisoners. All went well and 20-year-old Lt. de Moubray was soon reunited with parents he had not seen for many years.

In 1946, finding army work as a Captain abroad rather boring, Guy successfully applied for a place at Trinity College, Oxford to undertake studies in economics and finance. By lucky accident he narrowly missed his military flight to the UK and ended up next day taking a spare seat on a BOAC flying boat that offered a much higher level of comfort. The flight took four days, with interesting stopovers, and remains one of his most memorable journeys. His luck continued on leaving the course at Oxford, when he joined the Treasury in London and on his first day met the attractive girl who was to be his wife for almost fifty years (and who would have her own important career in the war effort). Guy next moved to the Bank of England and by 1956 (dubbed a high flyer) worked in the Chief Cashier's Office. He then was recommended for the job in the IMF as personal assistant to Per Jacobsen, from Basle, and in whirlwind style found he and his heavily pregnant wife moving to the USA within two weeks, for a two-year work period with the Jacobsens. (Sadly, Mrs de Moubray suffered a variety of illnesses and operations during their long marriage, particularly in the 1990s before she died.)

Having long retired from the Bank of England, Mr de Moubray realised that Buxlow Manor, his attractive 17th-century home, had great potential for tourism and entered the "Open to View" scheme. He is still actively welcoming guests for short talks and guided tours. Four years ago he published a detailed history of his life, views and travels and has since published a couple of cookery guides with recipes. No stranger to technology at the age of 84, he runs a comprehensive personal website: [www.buxlow.com](http://www.buxlow.com)

## **24 September 2009 – "Lowestoft's Defences 1939–45" – by Rob Jarvis**

Rob is curator of the Lowestoft War Memorial Museum at Sparrow's Nest and gave details of the extent and manning of the town's wartime defences. At the outbreak of war, being a seaport with low shelving beaches and cliffs opposite occupied parts of the Continent, Lowestoft became a prime target for aerial and sea attack. The defended area stretched from Tramp's Alley at Corton to Crazy Mary's Hole, at the Pontins site, and inland as far as Carlton Colville, Oulton Broad and Oulton Village. Within this area were a number of ditches and lines of concrete blocks to trap and stop tanks and other military vehicles in the event of an invasion. The beaches had barbed wire and scaffolding barricades from 1941, punctuated at intervals by pill-boxes. North Denes boxes were hexagonal with two gun embrasures on each face – two boxes on the south esplanade were disguised beneath sun shelters.

Seaward-facing batteries with battery observation posts were placed at Gunton Cliff (near Briar Clyffe school), the South Pier, Kensington Gardens and Pakefield (Pontins). Early ex-naval guns were used initially, and after the war these outdated items were sent for scrap. Anti-aircraft batteries were based at Pakefield, also near to St Margaret's Church, and to help counter night raids most batteries were equipped with two searchlights. In addition, the north beach was protected by underwater chains linking metal 'dragons teeth' and was mined to prevent access by seaborne military forces (the south beach was not mined). In 1938/9 the first evacuees were brought to Potter's Hopton Camp before being moved further inland. Following the fall of France in 1940, standing orders allocated three battalions for the defence of Lowestoft. The Home Guard was formed and Royal Navy Units, many of the latter based at Sparrow's Nest (which as the headquarters of the Central Patrol Service Depot for the duration was given the name *HMS Europa*). The sailors were brought there for training, being essential to assist with sea defences and manning the many naval boats then using the harbour. Residents had to get used to the black-out regulations and the Anderson or Morrison air-raid shelters. Some roads in town were prepared with underground explosive charges and removable barricades to disrupt traffic if needed (the Claremont Pier was cut away at the beach end and the Harbour Bridge was to be blown up if required). After 1943, barrage balloons were installed to put off low flying enemy aircraft. Local industries like the Coachworks were turned over to producing items needed for the war effort and boat-building yards constructed various sizes of craft from airborne lifeboats up to minesweepers. Many of these craft were built of wood so as to avoid

setting off magnetic mines when cruising out at sea. Suitable fishing vessels were commandeered for naval duties and fitted with guns to give them some protection against any enemy craft they might encounter.

After 1944 some regulations were relaxed, as the threat of invasion receded, and most of the defences were removed soon after 1945. Pill-boxes can still be found in several places but the south Lowestoft battery observation posts and gun casemate, by the CEFAS building at Pakefield, are not recognised by today's generation. A handful of concrete anti-tank cubes remain in the Lowestoft area, but most of the defence ditches dug along the coast and around town were filled in shortly after peace was declared. A few can be traced by the enthusiast but are mostly overgrown now.

*(More details about Suffolk coastal defences surrounding Lowestoft were in Newsletter Number 3, 2009, which may be found available for reference, with many other past issues, on our website: [www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk](http://www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk))*

### **The 2010 Winter Meal venue**

The Society's committee recently discussed alternative venues for the next Winter Meal, but decided that Lowestoft College still offered the best value and variety of menu for our size of group. The date booked for 2010 is Thursday 4 February and the cost per person will be £17.00. As we have only one meeting in January it is essential that your reservations are in before Christmas. It will be of help if those who have an email address could supply it to the Treasurer [ [Ray93@talktalk.net](mailto:Ray93@talktalk.net) ] for the menu to be forwarded. Further details will appear in later Newsletters.

### **Timings and parking for the visit to the Lowestoft Cine and Camcorder Club on 22 October**

The Cine and Camcorder Club visit will start at 7.30 pm, finishing with tea at 9.15 pm. Subject to demand, they will continue after the break until 10.00 pm, but individual members will be free to leave at any earlier time they choose.

The most convenient free car park is opposite the main gates to Sparrows Nest Gardens by the roundabout where the bottom of the Ravine joins Whapload Road. From the car park walk through the gates of the Sparrows Nest and the Club cinema is the white building fairly close on your left. There is a sign on this building.

**Annual Report: Please bring or post any article(s) you have for inclusion in the report to Ray Collins during the next two to three months. These may be typed or handwritten. It would help production if the text could be prepared in electronic form (e.g. a Word file), but this is not essential. The deadline is Christmas for electronic and typed items – if handwritten send in a bit earlier please. If you prefer, electronic articles can be emailed direct to: [Ray93@talktalk.net](mailto:Ray93@talktalk.net)**

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