

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

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Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2009/10

10 Sept 2009 "Memoirs of a Suffolk Gentleman" by Guy de Moubray – author and economist, and the owner of historic Buxlow Manor, he will talk about his travels and experiences.

24 Sept 2009 "Lowestoft's Defences 1939–1945" by Rob Jarvis – this local author will share his in-depth knowledge of war time precautions in Lowestoft and the surrounding area.

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.

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

Before the summer break Terry Weatherley guided us on a visit to Henstead and Kessingland churches, a short report on which appears in this issue. Some of us enjoyed a meal afterwards at Livingstone's Restaurant.

Tonight, to open our autumn season, we welcome Guy de Moubray who brings us the *Memoirs of a Suffolk Gentleman*.

With all good wishes **Lilian Fisher**

Details of recent events:

"FULL ACCREDITATION CERTIFICATE AWARDED TO LOWESTOFT MUSEUM"

The Trustees of Lowestoft Museum celebrated this award in July when Waveney MP Bob Blizzard met them at the Museum in Broad House, Everitt's Park, and presented the certificate to Chairman Malcolm Berridge. The honour was granted by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and means that our museum now meets nationally recognised standards and operates to the same set of rules as larger, professional museums. "The Museum team are all volunteers and those involved with the accreditation application have worked very hard to achieve this important status," said Ron Ashman, the trustee's secretary. Our members will know that much improvement work and rearrangement of the displays was done prior to the Museum opening this season. Visitor numbers have been surprisingly good to date and it seems that more families are staying in the UK due to the downturn in the economy. We are still looking for volunteer stewards to enable us to extend our opening hours.



Chairman Malcolm Berridge receives the Lowestoft Museum Accreditation Certificate from Waveney MP Bob Blizzard, flanked here by Museum Trustees past and present. *Picture copyright Mick Howes.*

11 June 2009 – "Visits were made to two local Churches" – led by Terry Weatherley

St Mary's Church, Henstead

The group managed to find the car park, tucked behind the trees fringing the churchyard extension, and made their way across the road to the recently tidied graveyard surrounding the church. It stands on a slope with fine views across agricultural land. Like so many Suffolk churches, St Mary's is rather remote from the scattered houses making up today's village. This is due to much of the old village on the east side being destroyed by fire in 1641. The fire spread to the chancel and unfortunately the Parish Writings were destroyed.

The present chancel was rebuilt to a unified plan without chancel arch, step or screen. There is however, in the north wall, a door that shows the position of the original chancel arch. The stone surround to the south doorway is an example of splendid, highly decorated Norman work circa 12th-century, while the north door, of a similar date, is of plainer style. There is a stoup within the vaulted porch. A photograph within the church illustrates the interior prior to the latest rebuilding phase carried out in 1906. It shows the box-type pews and the earlier three-decker pulpit. The present interior is fairly plain, having exposed dark-stained beams and has a few interesting monuments – one refers to William Clark, a Naval Commander, slain in combat in the Indian Ocean when his ship was overcome by a Dutch vessel – others mark the Bence and Sparrow family links, including earlier incumbents of the 1640s. Two memorials are formed of Coade stone an artificial marble invented by a Mrs Coade. A donor window commemorates Charles Sheriffe, a relative of Robert Sheriffe of Diss (who died in 1840) and of Thomas Bowen Sheriffe of Henstead Hall (Squire), died 1664. The font has a tapering decorative wooden cover of some height, surmounted by a dove with wings spread. The organ retains its hand-pumped bellows. There is one bell in the tall and well-proportioned tower.

St Edmund's Church, Kessingland

The massive tower of St Edmunds Kessingland has perpendicular windows and fine flushwork. Richard Russell of Dunwich (who began it in 1437) died in 1440 and construction was then passed to another mason who took 12 years to complete the task – the change in windows and buttress pattern is clear to see. Like several others in East Anglia it forms an excellent reference point for passing ships. There is a fine hang of six bells, which were in use for practise when we toured. The west door in the tower has various designs that include a Tudor Rose, an anchor, a Bishop's Mitre, also a dolphin and a heart pierced by three arrows. Two angels holding censers flank this door and above it is the seated figure of St Edmund, positioned centrally within an elaborate frieze

containing shields. In 1598 John Bucknam left monies to repair the church, but by 1668 it was in such a poor condition that the nave collapsed. The present chancel and nave (built in 1908) are, like Henstead unbroken, giving a view of the 15th-century font, also by Russell, featuring saints in niches and considered one of the finest in Suffolk. Near the present south wall are ruins of an earlier south aisle. The south door is no longer in use. Two brass memorials inside commemorate the dead from both wars. Mr Jack Strowger of Kessingland commissioned a modern window in memory of his wife Katherine to honour the Driftermen of Kessingland. Nicola Kantorowicz AMGP designed the stylish glass dedicated by the Bishop of Thetford in 2007. A number of monuments in the chancel are dedicated to past incumbents and there is a five-light East Window with Tracery by Kempe of London that mirrors some figures from the font.

"Further excavations at the Triple Post Alignment (causeway) on Beccles Marshes in July 2009"

In the September 2007 Newsletter Keith Davies reported details of the ongoing excavation at Beccles supported by Suffolk County Council In July this year the public were invited to view the third (and probably final) stages of this work by a team of archaeologists from Birmingham University. This Project has been funded by English Heritage and supported locally, in particular by Beccles Town Council and the Beccles Amateur Sailing Club. It is hoped that eventually a permanent display may be arranged with a local museum.

Well-preserved large posts were discovered below ground during bank realignment of the River Waveney in 2006. The three digs (2006, 2007 and 2009) have established these are part of a triple post causeway structure, of which 500 metres have now been traced, dating to 75BC, or near the very end of the Iron Age. In addition to the large upright oak posts a substantial quantity of worked wood and pottery fragments (Iron Age and Roman) has been found, also some adjoining trackways made from bundles of wooden rods. The causeway runs at an oblique angle to the river approximately north-west to south-east. Because only the lower ends of the posts are preserved below the peat (see both pictures) we don't know if they ever supported a superstructure such as a raised platform, but there is evidence of notches cut in the sides of some that might have located smaller diameter cross members.

Students at work on the dig near Beccles Yacht Club. Keith Davies shows the scale of the principal oak posts.

