

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

Volume 38 Number 2 – **NEWSLETTER** – FEBRUARY 2010

Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2010

25 Feb 2010 "Smuggling on the Suffolk/Norfolk Coast" by Jackie Clover – A history of this forbidden but very common and lucrative activity in our area.

11 Mar 2010 "Treasures of East Anglian Churches" by Kate Smith – Examples of rare and wonderful objects that were placed within our historic churches.

25 Mar 2010 "Finds on Pakefield Cliffs" by Paul Durbidge – The nationally important discovery that humans occupied our area much earlier than previously thought.

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

Tonight Jackie Clover will give us an interesting talk on *Smuggling on the Norfolk and Suffolk Coast*.

Our Museum will be opening for the season on Monday 29 March, a few days before Good Friday, 2 April. I am sending out letters to welcome all our helpers who volunteer to work as stewards in the Museum each day from 1.30pm to 4.30pm. If anyone else can help, please get in touch with me, as we badly need additional cover.

On 4 February many of us enjoyed the Society's annual winter meal at the College. Our thanks are due to Ray Collins for all his work in organising a splendid evening.

Terry Weatherley reports a slight change of plan for the church visit in June. We will first go to Benacre church, then on to South Cove. Afterwards, some members may arrange to go for a meal at the Wrentham 5 Bells.

With good wishes, *Lilian Fisher*

Details of recent events:

28 January 2010 – "A Box of Delights" – by Terry Weatherley

Terry Weatherley explained the benefits of attending local auctions with his wife – she seeking micromosaics and he curios. Terry loves examining the boxes of oddments, sometimes leaving a modest bid on them. This is rather like a raffle, but if you lose you don't have to pay for the ticket. On the following Saturday, just go in to see what you have won. With luck, a box can contain the odd gem, and he brought a range of his finds to show to the meeting. An early success was catalogued as a box of miscellaneous archaeological items and included fossil shells, plus a range of Roman pottery that was labelled Silchester (a site excavated by the Society of Antiquaries around 1900). There was also an English Delft tile (damaged but, after researching the illustration through the library, dateable to c1750 and made in Lambeth). Two Dutch Delft tiles came in the next sale, a damaged one from 1650 and an unbroken one of a Dutch soldier c1635 that was particularly rare.

Books are very common, sometimes of great age. One with a lovely tooled leather cover dated from 1688. The bookplate was interesting – Terry, with limited Latin, read LOIDIS as Lod burial place of St George, but was then told it meant Leeds. An email to the Leeds Diocesan Archivist established it had been presented to the school library. Another volume turned out to be two in one – Mrs Chapone's Letter and Gregory's Legacy, published in 1808. Both stories gave advice to clever girls. Hester Chapone opined that girls should conceal their cleverness while Gregory suggested the opposite. Terry researched Hester Chapone using a library card to gain access to the online Dictionary of National Biography. This small extract gives a flavour of her advice on Friendship.

The grand cement of this kind of friendship is the telling of secrets, which they call confidence; and I verily believe that the desire of having secrets to tell, has often helped to draw silly girls into very unhappy adventures. If they have no lover or amour to talk of, the too frequent subject of their confidence, is betraying the secrets of their families; or conjuring up fancied hardships to complain against their parents or relations.

Needless to say Mrs Chapone strongly disapproved of this kind of topic. Other beautifully bound ancient books cover a wealth of subjects and now grace the shelves at the Weatherley home.

There are always boxes that include collectable pottery from Suzy Cooper and Clarice Cliff to Meissen, sometimes listed and sometimes not. Terry is constantly looking up the source of examples that turn up in local sales, even consulting our own Museum when he discovered a piece of (badly damaged) Lowestoft dating to 1775 and believed painted by one of the Redgrave family. He also found a hand tinted Ambrotype (an early photo of about 1860), and a Victorian photograph album. The latter contained a range of family portraits. One photo and only one was named on the back Kate Colvile. An Ancestry search revealed she was baptized by Revd William Colvile, her father, who was Rector at Baylham in Suffolk. There is a picture of Baylham Church. So the first two portraits are probably of her father. The only report that about him was that someone noticed he preached wearing black kid gloves. The east window of the church contains 19C glass by Clayton and Bell in his memory. His wife was Margaret Augusta, daughter of General Kelso. Looking through the baptism registers and the census showed there were 8 daughters and a son William. A group photo seems to show the whole family at William's wedding. Later, some of the sisters lived in Worthing, and in Bayswater, London.

Also in the album was an Italianate house. Terry tried hard to find its location, finally putting up a web page on the British Archaeology site. Within the hour he got a reply. The house had been built as a railway hotel for Morton Peto's Colchester Station. The RIBA looked in *The Builder* and found details of the building and the architect, Lewis Cubitt, who also designed Kings Cross Station. What became of the building? It was eventually turned into an asylum – so why was it in the album? A family member who became an inmate? A family member who worked there? Who knows? A real mystery.

Another box of miscellaneous items contained a pair of elephant bookends, two clock movements and a very faded child's sampler with an alphabet, verse and the name Mary Patrick, Oulton School, aged 11. A search of the Parish registers revealed the Patrick family, and a Mary Ann, in the 1851 and 1861 censuses. Whites Directory says Oulton School was run and funded by the vicar at that time. The next census has Mary as general servant to Samuel Freeman Abbott of Lowestoft High Street, who ran the Bazaar Press and Fancy Repository. The trail then goes cold as Mary probably married and changed her surname. However, Terry visited St Michael's Oulton in January 2010 and, guided by an old photo, found the headstones of her parents William and Hannah Patrick but no record of their children.

A wealth of interest comes from researching the history, and tracing the characters revealed in these remarkably inexpensive bargains. So these examples show just some of the delights from Terry's box!

11 February 2010 – "The Great Yarmouth Archaeological Map" – by Ken Hamilton

Archaeological planner and geophysicist Ken Hamilton showed members the new archaeological map of Great Yarmouth, the result of five years of drilling, checking and analysis of core samples from the site of the original town. The project was part funded by the European Union and English Heritage. Ken proposed that Yarmouth be considered historically as a riverside rather than a seaside town, having its roots on the spit of sand deposited by the tide at the mouth of the River Yare from around 1000AD. At that time, the Southtown and Gorleston area formed a large estuary of the Rivers Yare, Bure and Ant. By Domesday there were 70 burgesses listed in

Yarmouth, being tradesmen other than fishermen or landed residents. The Town Wall was built in 1289, leaving a considerable amount of Denes outside, and by 1334 Yarmouth became the 5th-richest town in England with a population of some 5000, many of whom lived in the series of parallel, narrow passageways (rows) that are only found in a handful of English towns and are possibly of Scandinavian origin. At its peak the town had 145 rows a number of which survive to the present day, along with 70% of the Town Wall, the latter in an excellent state of preservation.

The mid 1300s brought the Black Death, silting up of the river mouth, and the Hundred Years War, all of which made for a huge recession lasting until the return of the herring shoals saw an upturn in prosperity almost 400 years later. A map of 1588 shows the town with a huge marketplace, substantial walls to seaward, defence batteries, many houses and the church of the Greyfriars. In 1668 Sir Robert Paston bought large areas of land in Southtown, intending to develop and sell houses with space and style to compete with the dark and poorly equipped rows across the river. However, his plan failed and not one plot was sold. Access to Yarmouth remained almost totally by sea, with a lane linking the town centre to the Jetty on the seashore, and major expansion plans had to wait for the coming of the industrial revolution and the railway. These linked the port with inland towns and cities, paving the way for tourism and trade on a scale previously unknown.

Ken said the Norfolk archaeologists devised a system where, initially, 12 boreholes were drilled across the area of the original town, avoiding roadways. A successful result meant the drilling was extended to a total of 144 bores, averaging 5m in depth. A virtual map of the old town was created showing three levels of deposited sands and four settlement stages. All the cores were sieved and any artefacts recorded, thus giving an accurate spatial plan of their location and depth, related to time of deposition. Layers were dated by pottery and wood samples. In the marketplace there was evidence of ironworking, and hammer scale from Blacksmithing, that may have been a seasonal occupation. The areas fronting the river revealed remains of stout medieval oak posts, apparently used to reinforce the quayside, which had been backfilled mainly with domestic refuse, including pottery. The survey showed quays were eroded and repaired at the rate of 100m in 300 years. Originally the seaward side of the town wall was protected by a moat, but this gradually filled with debris and advice was given that it should be cleared, and the wall reinforced by placing material from the Denes behind it (the residents took the easy option of using domestic refuse). Most of the local defence systems it seems were weak and ineffective for the same reason.

During the survey, access was obtained to the 15th-century Howard Street Undercroft (one part dates to the 12th century) and a 3D laser scan was taken of this unique structure. This translates into a very accurate image of the brickwork, now positioned some way below the present street level. Over the centuries deposition of waste raised much of the ground level in town by some 2m, shown when the St Nicholas churchyard was cleared to its original level in 1879. Parts of the Town Wall reveal this change of level today. Prior to this drilling programme, only Fuller's Hill had been professionally excavated, so the new work has added enormously to the history of Yarmouth. The website for those interested in this survey is GYAM.org.uk

The Society's Annual Report on last year's activities is now available from the Treasurer, price £2.00.

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