

# Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

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

## What's On in 2011

**14 April 2011 "Aircraft Archaeology" by Ian McClachan** – Ian is an authority on the USAAF in wartime, and brings evocative descriptions of 'digs', courage, sacrifice and bravery.

**12 May 2011 "The Life and Work of George Skipper – Norfolk Architect" by David Summers** – David will bring an expert view on G Skipper's work in East Anglia.

**26 May 2011 Annual General Meeting** – All members are invited to attend.

**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*

**Important note** about the Church visit on 23 June. Please be aware that due to building work at Wangford church we will visit Sotterley chapel instead. We will still be visiting the church at Covehithe and the meal afterwards will be at the Five Bells, Wrentham.

On Thursday 26 May we will be holding our Annual General Meeting. I do hope that members will attend this meeting, for although you may not wish to be on the Committee, it is important for you to come along and elect those who do wish to be Committee members. It is also an opportunity to raise any issues or suggestions you might have regarding the Society. There will be tea, coffee and biscuits available after the meeting, (a small donation would be appreciated to cover costs).

Ron Ashman (Vice Chairman)

## Chairman's Column

Our Museum in Oulton Broad, Everitt's Park will re-open on Monday 18 April, and we hope that lots of visitors will be coming to look round the exhibits.

Voluntary Stewards will be needed to help, so please get in touch with Ray Collins, our Treasurer, if you can give a few hours each week.

On the 23 June, the church outing will visit Covehithe Church and Sotterley Chapel and the meal afterwards will be at the Five Bells Inn, Wrentham. If you have not decided on your choice from the menu, please do so as soon as possible. Two courses are £11.95 and three courses are £14.95.

With best wishes, **Lilian Fisher**

## **Details of recent events:**

### **10 March 2011 – "Roman Norfolk " – by John Davies**

John Davies is employed by Norwich Castle Museum, and is an expert on Roman Britain with a specialist knowledge of coinage.

When the Romans arrived in AD43 it is not certain how the Roman and Iron Age Britons cultures interfaced with each other. Most of our knowledge, particularly of the Britons culture, comes from brooches and coins found either from 'digs' or from field walking carried out by responsible people using metal detectors. Coins are a good indicator of the period of use at any particular site.

The Roman presence in East Anglia had been small compared to other parts of the country until the Iceni rebellion of AD61. After this time a number of forts and towns were completed as the Romans asserted their authority on this area. It was thought that the Iron Age culture in East Anglia continued longer than the rest of the country initially due to the pact between the Iceni and the Romans, and it appears to have survived throughout the Roman period.

John showed many slides of brooches, coinage, bronze statues and religious items, some of high quality.

When the Romans invaded they not only brought their legions, but also twice as many traders and administrators to support them. They do not, however, appear to have brought much coinage, so they improvised by producing their own from melted down bronze.

Banks existed during the Roman period, but these were not always trusted and many buried their savings in the ground, as borne out by the number of coin hordes that have been found.

The quality of the coinage was lower in the third and fourth centuries. In the mid-third century masses of 'counterfeit' coins were minted. These were made to supplement the official coinage of which there was a shortage at that time. About 20 sites have been identified where this work was carried out and the coins produced during this period were smaller in size.

The indigenous population had their own Gods, as did the Romans, and many bronze replicas of these have been found.

The only large town in Norfolk and Suffolk was at Caistor by Norwich (Caistor St Edmund). The indications are that the Iceni had a settlement there up to the AD61 rebellion. The Roman name of *Venta Icenorum* means 'market place of the Iceni'. The town was established by the Romans when they took full control of the land of the Iceni. A street plan was laid out in the first century and public buildings were erected during the second century. These included a forum, basilica, at least two temples and a bath house inside the wall, located near the river for a supply of water. South west of the town is the site of an amphitheatre that has been plotted by geophysics but not as yet excavated. The existing town wall was there for the last 140 years of occupation. Around the area were smaller towns that included Brampton, and Caister, near Great Yarmouth, both of them producing a large number of sticks, for writing on wax tablets, among other artefacts. Brampton was a focus for industry, as a large number of pottery kilns have been found along the side of the road leading into the town.

Late in the Roman period, in the third century, a series of large forts were built around the coast as part of the Saxon Shore defences. Similar forts were also built on the continental coast. Those in Norfolk were at Brancaster and Burgh Castle. Inland and coastal towns were also fortified with walls, which were thought to have been to repel continental raiders. However, Mr Davies suggested that these defences may have been constructed primarily to protect trade routes as they are to be found near major waterways. Much of the movement of trade goods during Roman times would have been by sea and river.

Some of the stone used in the construction of the fort at Brancaster can now be seen in the local church.

### **24 March 2011 – "One of the Last Horsemen" by Ron Ashman**

Ron's talk was about his grandfather, Charles Palmer, who worked over 30 years as a horseman on Lodge Farm in Lound. He retired in 1959, at the age of 67, and was one of the last true horsemen in this area. The use of horses on the farm was drawing to a close during the 1950s and most of the methods and machinery used at that time have disappeared from the agricultural scene. For example, the harvest started with the crop being cut by the 'Binder', then the stacking of the sheaves, followed by the thrashing to extract the grain. Today these are completed by the combine harvester in one operation.

The horseman was the senior worker on the farm and Mr Palmer also acted as the farm foreman, stack builder and stack thatcher. Mr Palmer was employed by the late Horace Rolph, who farmed the land that bordered the waterworks, to the north of the village of Lound. The crops grown included a field each of oats, mangels, sugarbeet, hay and wheat: plus three fields of malting barley. The mangels, hay and some of the oats were grown to feed the horses and bullocks; the bullocks being raised as beef cattle.

Mr Rolph was, like many in the area at that time, a 'gentleman' farmer, that is he did not do any work on the farm, except one job during the stacking of the grain crops.

In earlier times the horseman was paid a fixed weekly wage whereas the 'day men', the ordinary farm workers, were likely to be laid off in wet weather. There was a distinct pecking order on larger farms where a number of horsemen were employed. The head man led his team out of the stable first, with the following teams in order of seniority. woe betide anyone who stepped out of order.

There are many myths and legends surrounding these old horsemen. Ron had read many accounts of special potions and rituals that were said to be used to control the horses. These horsemen did not boast about their powers, on the contrary they were said to be very secretive. Ron had no doubt that the horsemen had a way of controlling their charges, as they were skilled in their work. However, he could not help but believe that some of the stories were the horsemen 'pulling someone's leg'. Regarding his grandfather, Ron said he controlled his horses by verbal command, as he had never seen his grandfather wield a whip or a stick. Mr Palmer looked after four horses which were used for much of the work on the farm with some work being carried out by a Fordson tractor.

Horses were once believed to be very susceptible to the powers of witches. Hag-stones, that is stones with holes in them that were seen hanging up outside buildings in Suffolk, were to prevent witches taking the animals and riding them around the fields at night, thus tiring them and making them unfit for work the next day. Or could the latter have been a cover for smugglers 'borrowing' these horses to move their booty?

The horses had a diet of rolled oats mixed with chaff (chopped hay), chopped mangels and hay. In some areas beans and carrots were used instead of mangels.

At harvest time the corn crop was cut by a 'Binder'. When all the corn had been cut and the sheaves had dried sufficiently it was time for them to be stacked. The stacks were built by Mr Palmer in a very precise way to prevent rain penetrating the sides, and when completed he thatched the top using wheat straw.

The final part of the harvest was when the stacks were threshed. The equipment to complete this task (usually hired) arrived in a little procession consisting of a tractor towing a tarpaulin covered thresher and elevator.

With the passing of the horse age, country crafts such as the blacksmith, wheelwright, wainwright and harness maker have also disappeared.

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

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