

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

Volume 40 Number 2 – **NEWSLETTER** – February 2012

Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2012

9 Feb 2012 "The effects of The Plague in Suffolk" by author and historian Pip Wright

23 Feb 2012 "1836 Poor Law Emigration from Blything" by member Myra Kestner

8 Mar 2012 "Victorian Health and Sickness" by Katrina Siliprandi, Educ. Department of Norwich Castle Museum

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

Suffolk Local History Council have organised a Societies Day on Saturday 17 March at Blackbourne Hall in Elmswell, (betwen Stowmarket and Bury St Edmunds). We will have a stand there and all members are welcome to attend. Leaflets giving the programme and a location map will be available on the Secretary's table at Society meetings. Last year my e-mail address was added to the Society website. As a result, several e-mails have been received not only from this country but also from as far afield as Canada. Most of these related to information about speakers or membership whilst a few requested historical information. See more details overleaf.

Ron Ashman – Chairman

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Details of recent events:

26 January 2012 – "Sinners in the Saints?" by Terry Weatherley

Terry used the 2011 Churches Cycle ride to garner information for his January talk "Sinners in the Saints?". He borrowed a bike and, with a friend, decided to tour the Saints, a flat area ideal for cycling in north Suffolk where locals say people can get lost for days. Taking photos and collecting details helped him produce an excellent set of slides to illustrate his talk on key features of the cluster of churches all named after Saints, in the Ilketshall and South Elmham parishes Starting east of the Roman 'Stone Street' at the church of Ilketshall St Andrew, the riders planned a route that involved the most churches and the least pedalling, thus making the outlier, South Elmham St James, last in the group. These villages display a good selection of signs, and the group has now earned its own Wikipedia entry.

Ilketshall St Andrew has some recently cleaned wall paintings including a rare example of a wheel of fortune, also a medieval lady, and one of the earliest depictions of a church building. The 14c paintings were professionally restored and many Society members went to see this in

progress. Afterwards, taking the narrow lane towards the A144 Bungay to Halesworth Road they came to Ilketshall St John the Baptist. This church has a crooked, or ‘weeping’ chancel, built off-centre to the left, possibly to represent the drooping of Christ’s head on the cross. But were medieval masons that incompetent? The main church was heavily restored in the mid-nineteenth century and the porch in 1908. Funds for a window came from the then Prince of Wales. Relieving arches are among signs of earlier builds, and the slope of the roof shows it was originally thatched. The churchyard has some fine monuments.

Close to the Roman road is Ilketshall St Lawrence church, thought by some to be on the site of a Roman marching camp – it certainly sits on a small platform. According to Christian history St Lawrence was entrusted with the safety of the Holy Grail, sending it to his parents in northern Aragon. He passed this sacred chalice to a friend for delivery to the monastery of Saint John of Pena – it is accepted the chalice has been venerated and preserved by a number of monks and monasteries through the ages. Today a Holy Grail exists in a special Catholic Cathedral chapel in Valencia. Built into the porch wall of St Lawrence is an ancient stone fertility symbol and inside, the church has fine scissor beams.

Across the main road is yet another Ilketshall church, this being dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch. Very popular in the middle ages, she protected pregnant women during childbirth. One of her torments was to be swallowed by the Devil in the shape of a dragon, but she made the sign of the Cross causing the dragon to burst apart. The church has dark paint on the chancel ceiling and a splayed window shows the great thickness of the walls. A round window in the tower (moulded in mortar around a basket) is possibly Saxon. There is evidence of a Norman north door and a priest’s door in Victorian Gothic style.

Terry’s first Saint appears here as Henry Smith, who in 1626 ...*devised a gift to be bestowed in donations of clothing, bread, flesh, or fish, among the poor of the parish of St Margaret, who have been inhabitants above five years...The estates charged with this donation are situated at Tolleshunt D’Arcy, Essex, and produce about £4 per annum.*

Terry’s Sinner here is English Heritage who in 1993 arranged for the tower to be rendered, claiming it was the original finish for flint towers. Everyone, even the Parish Council, voted against it!

Moving to South Elmham, our cyclists came to St Peter, another church gem. Inside it is a fine screen and an harmonium, while the outside is a church anorak’s dream. Here is a perpendicular window replacing a bricked up, early arched one. Here again a bricked up north door – later than the window because the arch is pointed – elsewhere signs of a very large window. Flushwork on the tower and the parapet is high quality, signs of a rich patron in later times. Nearby is St Peters Hall. This is now a fine restaurant but the building shows many styles. Mr Tasburgh, an early owner, bought the ecclesiastical windows, porch and associated parts of Flixton Priory. These were of Caen stone, an immensely valuable material where brick and flint were the norm, and only available to the wealthiest sections of society, often the church. In 1538-9 he hired workmen to extend his house and there came more Sinners because... *In the summer of 1539 a feast was held to commemorate completion of the work, and, too much beer was drunk, some guests singing a ballad against the Bishop of Rome (the Pope).* One rumour of a tunnel between the Hall cellars and the church crypt was disproved in the 1940s when a special dig produced no evidence.

The next church of S E St Michael stands surrounded by commons. On approach, a fierce sundial greets the visitor, but the porch protects a fine Norman doorway whose round arch is supported on two typical Norman asymmetric headed columns. The inside of the church is simple, with no chancel arch, and the reredos behind the altar shows St Michael flanked by the local St Felix and St Fursey. St Michael South Elmham is one of only 36 ‘thankful villages’ out of 18,000-odd parishes in the country. Every young man they sent to the First World War returned alive. This was repeated in World War Two, so (almost uniquely in England) there is no war memorial. Only 14 villages had no casualties in either war.

Close by, South Elmham All Saints is in the care of the redundant Churches Trust, though in ancient times it served a congregation large enough to need a side aisle. From its medieval past remain a Purbeck font, on four pillars, and a couple of Flemish roundels set in a jigsaw of medieval glass. One roundel shows St Dorothy with her flowers, the other St Ursula and the ship she set sail in with 5,000 virgins, only to be slaughtered by Huns. Fine carved pew ends include many beasts, some mythical, where the woodcarver showed great imagination.

Next is S E St Margaret, a solid church built in more prosperous times. The flushwork is impressive. The plain interior belies the treasure it contains – a couple of Old Testament Saints, Micah and Isaiah, by FC Eden (a pupil of Butterfield) and interesting graffiti high on the chancel arch. There’s a Norman door, and the remains of the screen. Look carefully for the Saint – the Sinners were in the porch as shown by the five-hole stocks.

Furthest west is South Elmham St Cross, dedicated to St George. St Cross (sometimes termed Sancroft) may be a corruption of the Manor of Sancroft although some Norfolk churches are dedicated to the Holy Cross. The church has a couple of early windows and some beautiful graffiti on the door jamb. William Dowsing defaced the angels on the font, which is supported by four lions. The reredos shows a spirited St George. In the graveyard is buried Canadian poet and author Elizabeth Smart. She moved to London and her work had a cult following in the 1960s but by 1966 had retired to a cottage in north Suffolk. In a revival period she produced more literary work, returned to Canada in 1982 for two years, then back to London where she died in 1986.

Early maps of St Cross village show a brick works, and Terry found the Aldous family who ran it also made clay pipes. Their bricks were stamped with a cross and, with care, they can still be found in local walls and paths. South Elmham Hall, a 13th-century bishop’s palace, stands nearby within a four-acre moated site. Many features survive here including probably the earliest domestic wall paintings in Suffolk. The ecclesiastical building in a glade beyond the Hall is South Elmham Minster.

The cyclists ran out of time at South Elmham St Mary (now Homersfield) church. This is heavily restored and contains a Tounai-style font with blind arcading, and an oak cover commemorating Edward VII’s coronation. The only church in the cluster not reached by the riders was South Elmham St James, slightly to the south. However Terry knew that inside are a number of treasures. They include a medieval carving of St James the Greater with pilgrim staff, the St James gilded wooden cuckoo and two carvings of owls, there are some good brasses and a very pretty reredos behind the altar – a Victorian Gothic cover tops another Tounai-style font

Terry found more Sinners reported in Suckling’s *History of Suffolk*, quoting... ‘A case of watch the wall my darling, while the plunderers go by’ ... Sadly, times do not change!

Society Meal at Lowestoft College on 28 February 2012

The meal has already booked well but we need support from as many members and friends as possible. The cost is £19.00 per head, representing outstanding value for money. The menu is now available and, as usual, we will print a reminder slip for you to confirm your choice. You may pay by cheque in advance – make cheque payable to LA&LHS – or pay cash on the night to the treasurer, Ray Collins.

Some of the Chairman's e-mails:

A lady called Judith Jayawardane requested the location of certain buildings in Lowestoft that would have been familiar to her parents during World War 2, prior to her visiting our town. Both of her parents had served in the Royal Navy and were stationed at Lowestoft during that war. Her mother was located at the Kirkley Hotel and her father served as a telegraphist on the minesweeper Star of Pentland. They met at the Palais de Danse, a dance hall that was demolished in the 1960s when MAFF (now CEFAS) extended their facilities with a new laboratory. The Kirkley Hotel is now called Kirkley House, which is next to the Cliff Road car park.

The Star of Pentland (FY1688) was a trawler that had been taken over by the Admiralty in January 1940 for minesweeping duties. The boat had been built at Aberdeen in 1915 and was returned to its owner in 1946.

Robert Turner, who is researching his family history, inquired if Clement Square and Burton Road had been named after his relation. Clement Burton had a butchers shop in Norwich Road and Burton Road *was* named after him. (Jack Rose in one of his books refers to Clement Burton a butcher and farmer.)

Another request to identify a photograph came from a gentleman called Richard Schick, who lives in Shawnigan Lake, British Columbia, Canada. He is a collector of vintage photographs who had recently acquired the one shown here in a batch of views dating from about 1890.



On the back of this picture Richard said what appeared to be Colton (or possibly Culton or Calton) had been written. This picture shows Lake Lothing in Oulton Broad, seaward side, with the Wherry Inn, the long white building to the left of centre, as it was in the late 1800s. The Inn was pulled down in 1896 and re-built as the much grander Wherry Hotel. Slightly to the left and in front of the Wherry Inn can be seen the white-painted Mutford Lock bridge and gates that were installed in 1828. To the right of the lock entrance is an interesting bottle kiln, and on the far right, the Oulton Broad windmill, which was demolished in 1937, is just visible.

Just before Christmas a gentleman named Paul Draper, who lives in St Neot's, contacted us. He offered the Society a box of 35mm slides of Lowestoft that had been taken by his father in the late 1970s and early 1980s, which were accepted. A number of changes have happened in our town over the past 30 years and I will put together a talk, using these slides, next year.

EDITOR'S NOTE [The writing on the back of Mr Schick's photo would probably be Carlton. In the 1800s the boundary of the southern part of Oulton Parish, reached the north bank of Lake Lothing and the northern part of Carlton Colville Parish made up the opposite south bank, including the foreshore in the above picture. In 1904, part of each parish was renamed and combined into the Civil Parish of Oulton Broad; Carlton Colville railway station was then also renamed, becoming Oulton Broad South.]

Outing to Langley Abbey -- This has proved difficult to arrange, so the committee has agreed to drop the proposal this year

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

