

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

Volume 41 Number 1 – **NEWSLETTER** – January 2013

Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2013

24 Jan 2013 "A closer look at the treasures of Sutton Hoo"

Terry Weatherley reveals more details of this unique Suffolk discovery from the last century

14 Feb 2013 "Medieval Legacy in the East Anglian Landscape"

What revelations will be brought to us by Derek Leak's narrative? Perhaps a few skeletons?

28 Feb 2013 "How well do you know Lowestoft?"

Ron Ashman delivers part 2 of his interesting discoveries within our town's hidden recesses.

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

I hope you all had a very nice Christmas and that 2013 will be a prosperous year for everyone.

Terry Weatherley has decided to retire from organising the June evening church visit. The church visits were first started in the late 1970s when Bill Goode guided members around Round Tower churches in this area. Bill was very knowledgeable about these churches – he was not only the author of a book on the subject, but in 1973 founded the Round Tower Church Society. When Bill could no longer lead these visits, the role was taken over by Jon Reed.

Terry has been organising the church visits for many years and has widened the scope of churches seen to include many different and interesting ones of various denominations. I would like to thank Terry for organising these evening outings and for the research he carried out on the history, and the information he provided, for all of the locations. I would also like to thank Myra Kestner for organising the meal that, for those that wanted it, followed the church visits. Myra has recently moved from this area.

This year we will be visiting St Bartholomew's church at Corton on 27 June when Michael Soanes, the Corton history recorder, will give us a short talk about the church, then there will be time to look round afterwards. More details will be published later.

Ron Ashman – Chairman

8 November 2012 – "In the Footsteps of the Famous" – by Paul Scriven

Paul brought a different topic on this occasion by describing a large selection of Stately Homes, gardens and buildings that he and his wife had visited – all illustrated by his own slides. He began with an outline of how the interest of much of the public was aroused, as early as the 1700s, simply by their being excluded from the majority of the country's grand estates and homes. This led to irritation on the part of the owners when passers-

by stared at them through gates, over walls and fences, and later, from the tops of carriages and buses when roads encroached on their residences. Surprisingly, had the public been aware, access to parts of some estates could have been simply achieved by a quiet word, and a modest donation, to the housekeeper or butler, usually when the owners were out, or away on holiday. Starting in the 17th century, a great many of these estates and gardens were replanned by famous landscape gardeners, such as William Kent (renowned for Stowe) and Lancelot Capability Brown (responsible for developing Blenheim, Chatsworth and Kew Gardens amongst others). These early experts used plants and trees secured by several explorers and adventurers of the time on their travels around the world, and brought back to England to enhance and add new colour, style and variety to the gardens of the rich. In addition, and at enormous expense, ensued the most adventurous and complete reworking of the landscape ever seen, with rivers moved, hills remodelled, avenues and arboretums created around the newly extended and improved houses.

A great number of estates have historically been developed and maintained by titled families. Those titles would be either inherited, or else granted by royalty or government in recognition of important, sometimes philanthropic, actions by those in business; or perhaps, having outstanding roles in the armed forces. Economic circumstances have decided the success or failure of many important families without inherited titles, and also dictated the life-style of many with titled ancestry. The Marquis of Bath made a decisive step forward in 1966 when opening Longleat as a safari park. The concept of 'making the estate pay', was soon adopted by a wide range of entrepreneurial owners across the UK, and has brought about a very keen following among members of the public, who carefully plan to visit those that offer, usually seasonal, open days to paying visitors. Paul showed over forty such examples using his slides. He gave details from his copious notes about those who had created and lived in them across the generations and their families. These interesting characters included royalty, politicians, poets, actors, writers, artists, musicians, painters and naturalists, not to mention famous explorers, and the promoters of the Industrial Age.

22 November 2012 – "Visit to Lowestoft Cine & Camcorder Club"

The Cine Club welcomed us for another visit and put on a splendid variety of their work in both film and video formats for our final meeting in 2012. They got the evening off to a lively start with their entertaining dance version of Robin Hood, set to well-known musical scores. The evening's programme was then introduced, continuing with a very appropriate film recording a Chediston family's archaeological dig. Two young girls with a very keen interest prepared the site in their grandfather's garden, one digging and one recording any finds, while grandad filmed their efforts. After a very enjoyable dig they showed a variety of small artefacts (none of any great age) but concluded that on this occasion, the answer did not 'Lie in the soil'. Next was portrayed a visit to the Orford Ness National Trust site. This heavily vegetated coastal area, only accessible by boat, also contains buildings once used in secret activities, carried out during two World wars, to test and develop military weapons and equipment, including atomic material. In recent years, the area has been transformed into a perfect wetland haven for water birds and plants.

Then came the Cine club's unique film covering the progress of the Olympic torch through Lowestoft. They seized this once-in-a lifetime opportunity to permanently record and interview those sharing the honour of carrying the torch, in turn, as it progressed on a fine and sunny day from the northern town boundary through town and via Ness Point to the south side of the bridge. Here it remained for a short break before the motor cavalcade travelled on south with it to Wrentham. Another side of the local weather came next with beautifully captured scenes of snow gently falling in Corton Woods. The light and atmosphere were outstanding and given scale by the characters included in the latter stages of filming. Keeping to the theme of nature there came an award-winning film entitled 'Goodbye Benacre Broad'. Locals will know the encroaching sea has long threatened to break down the slim shingle bank protecting the freshwater broad near Covehithe. Cine club members attended during a period of devastatingly high tides in 2011, when the inevitable happened. They were able to capture the moment when the sea topped the bank and salt water cascaded into the fresh water inside. As the tide receded the bank gave way and the resulting outflow scoured the entrance, emptying the broad and exposing the mud and reed covered bottom and, presumably, washing away any fish that had lived there. The Club earned the three-star, highest award for their filming coup.

Prior to the break came three very amusing shorts, featuring members well known for their dry sense of humour. The evening then resumed with a visit to 'Disneyland', shot in 1982 by Jim Cheeseman on Super 8 film and now cleverly converted to DVD format. It gave a fun-packed and comprehensive view of the theme park in those days where, astonishingly, there was hardly a fat person to be seen. How things have changed in the 30 years of fast food that have followed. More time differences were to be demonstrated in 'Changing

Horsepower', where the passage of time on the farm was demonstrated by three sequential films of ploughing with horses, simple tractors, and finally, today's computer-controlled, massively powerful, modern counterparts gobbling up the fields. Keeping to the past, came a film of the 'Village that time forgot' showing Kersey in south Suffolk. Here the many thatched and timbered buildings have been so well preserved, viewers could easily imagine themselves transported back 300 years. It is a disappointment when a modern car is seen. Our members then enjoyed another humorous short 'Feeling my Age', leaving them laughing, and rounding off another extremely good presentation by the Cine & Camcorder team.

Society's Annual meal at Lowestoft College in St Peter's Street: Remember this is booked for Tuesday 12 February 2013 – arrive 7pm for 7.30pm and bring your reminder slip of what you ordered. The charge is £15.00 per head and this may be paid in advance, or to our treasurer Ray Collins promptly on arrival, if at the college please.

Annual Report: Ray Collins now has copies of the Annual Report for sale to members at just £2.00.



You shall not pass!

Gandalf was not the first person to utter that phrase – Do you know when and where this confrontation occurred?

Answer in next issue. Photo copyright B Soloman