

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

Volume 41 Number 6 – **NEWSLETTER** – Sept 2013

Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2013

12 Sept 2013 "**Memories of Pakefield**" Local historian, John Holmes, returns to entertain us. Members will get more first-hand information from John, regarding his birthplace.

26 Sept 2013 "**Duplex-drive Tanks at Fritton Lake**" Expert, Stuart Burgess, comes to tell us about the secret wartime development and testing of these experimental machines in our area.

10 Oct 2013 "**Benjamin Britten and his time at Lowestoft**" a Britten/Pears group talk. This year, being the centenary of his birth, it is very appropriate that we hear about on our famous local composer.

24 Oct 2013 "**A picture story of Margaret Catchpole**" by Pip Wright, who shows us images of this feisty 18th-century woman's extraordinary life and travels.

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 would like to welcome all members, those renewing their membership and all new members, to a series of talks that are both interesting and varied.

It is with sadness that I have to report that Lilian Fisher, who was our Chairman for 18 years, died in May. She achieved much during her time in that office for the Society, and in her work for the Museum. (*see obituary*)

The AGM was well attended again this year and there have been a few changes to the Officers. Janet Royce has retired from the Committee and, although sorry to see her leave, I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for her support as Vice Chairman and her valued contribution to discussions within the Committee. I am pleased to announce that Mrs Marilyn Duerden has agreed to become Vice-chairman and we welcome Richard Mundy as a new Committee member.

In addition to the election of myself as Chairman, the Committee for the season is as follows:

Marilyn Duerden - Vice Chairman. Irene Ashman - Secretary.

Ray Collins - Treasurer/Annual Report Editor.

Jenny Hatton - Programme Secretary. Don Friston - Newsletter Editor.

John Knowles - Committee member. Rodney Duerden - Committee member.

Janis Kirby - Committee member. Richard Mundy - Committee member.

Finally, congratulations to Ray Collins and the Museum team for working hard to renew the Accreditation for the Museum under the scheme now administered by the Arts Council England.

Ron Ashman – Chairman

Obituary: Lilian Fisher, late Chairman of the Society

Lilian Fisher did much for the Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society, in various roles, and for the Lowestoft Museum. She was a nice lady who was well thought of and respected by Society members.

Having joined the Society in the late 1970s her first committee post came in 1980, as programme secretary, a role she held for ten years. In 1990 she took on the role of Vice Chairman, then in 1993 became Chairman, a position she held until her retirement in 2011. During that time she supported other Society activities including outings to historical sites, field walking and taking displays to various history events, and for several years also organised our Christmas Social. In addition, she served as a member of the Trustees.

As well as being Society Chairman Lilian helped in running the Museum, acting as a regular steward and organising their attendance rota for many years. She also arranged pre-season and end of season get-togethers for the stewards and museum volunteers, where everyone had an opportunity to meet and have a say in the way their duties were organised, plus find out about future plans and events.

Over the years Lilian researched and wrote two booklets, 'Pakefield Past & Present' and 'A Brief History of Lowestoft'. She also produced articles for the Society's Annual Report. These included 'Researching My Road – Stradbroke Road', which traced the history of the old buildings near her home; 'The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages – Before and After 1837'; 'What Happened to Pakefield' and '16th Century Strangers in Norwich'.

Recent talks and meetings

9 May 2013 – "Catering the Royal Way" – by Patrick Thompson

Due to a misunderstanding of the title for this talk, members expected to hear about royal menus, but on the night it became clear that Patrick had been manager of the Royal Household and not a royal chef. Born in Lowestoft, where there was a substantial family presence, he was educated first at Pakefield, then at Alderman Woodrow School but later he moved away for extra tuition in catering. This training led to him securing employment within the famous

J. Lyons catering company and, after promotions, to his having overall responsibility for their three major branches in London, a post covering some 26,000 staff engaged in preparing and delivering several million meals each week.

While Patrick was still a relatively young manager, Mr Salmon of J. Lyons advised him he was required to attend a meeting, for which he was taken from Leicester Square by car, via the Mall to Buckingham Palace. He must have made a good impression for he soon received an official letter of appointment as the Deputy Master of the Queen's Household, apparently having been head-hunted. His managerial skills would now have to cope with staff of a much senior rank, from many departments at the Palace, including footmen, flagmen, chefs, etc. all of whom were in turn controlling various layers of servants.

Patrick continued by explaining the levels of hierarchy in Royal Households, beginning with much earlier centuries when the power of the Ruler was absolute. He gave some amusing, and embarrassing, examples of his inexperience in coping with these layers of protocol during his settling in period at Buckingham Palace. It is surprising how rules regarding the correct method of approaching and addressing the monarch have been retained across many centuries. All members of the royal family abide by these strict codes of dress and behaviour when on official duties, but are becoming more relaxed and open in their relationship with the public as time passes.

At one time there were fourteen royal palaces at various locations along the River Thames between Greenwich and Hampton Court. Henry VIII had 18 departments under his control, mostly supplying everyday necessities like food, heat, comfort and entertainment for his family and courtiers. Meals could be served up to five times per day, with catering staff able to supply anything from a snack to a banquet with hardly any warning. Despite the large number of staff, the Royal family achieved quiet areas by using 'the board of green cloth' – an area where doors and walls were covered in green baize and padded to make them sound proof.

Early rulers like Henry VIII, and Elizabeth I, lived a life of plenty. Their servants in general worked for the pleasure of the royal family, often without a regular wage, while the royal person would be given (or simply appropriate) any object to which they took a fancy. This system, noted by Samuel Pepys, led to a period where servants were tempted to steal clothes and linen from the royal chambers to make up for unpaid wages. The habits of more recent kings and queens are much improved although some rich gifts may still be found in the earlier royal collections.

Buckingham Palace was built for George IV on the site of Buckingham House but remained largely unused until Queen Victoria's accession in 1837. It was enlarged from the original 80 rooms to over 600, and stands in a 42-acre site in London's West End. In the 18th and 19th centuries the upkeep of the Royal Estate cost the public millions of pounds annually, so a Civil List was introduced, funding the royal household and family (down to grandchild level). It covers the salaries of the household staff, travel, entertaining, and public engagements at home and abroad.

In recent years the amounts have varied, and Queen Elizabeth II has arranged that a percentage of Civil List monies should be repaid to the country. Even at 87, our Queen still manages to complete from four, up to sixteen hours work per day, listening, mentoring and advising in many areas. She seems to have enormous reserves of energy and is rapidly approaching the signal event of being the longest-ever reigning monarch. Her aim is to ensure the royal household is managed so as to avoid all waste in its day-to-day running. To help in this the number of staff serving the Queen has been reduced to just 210 persons.

14 May 2013 – Evening visit to Broad House Museum, Everitt's Park

There were fewer members than expected at this event but those who went enjoyed the discussions, questions and explanations that arose during the tour of the building; and also being able to visit the stores and office areas not normally on view. First, Mike Chester talked in depth on the history of the Lowestoft Porcelain Collection, also answering questions in detail, on patterns and artists, from some fortunate members who have obtained their own Lowestoft Porcelain specimens. Paul Durbidge then explained how many of the archaeological specimens from East Anglia were collected by members, or donated to the museum over the past years. With fewer people attending, he could bring out some very small specimens from his outstanding Pakefield discoveries for examination under a lens. Ray Collins described the set up and workings of the museum, showing how displays had been enhanced this season, and he kindly organised the coffee interval. As this is the centenary year of Benjamin Britten, the museum has, with the help of the Britten/Pears group, put in a special exhibit giving some of his history and local connections. It includes a Pye 'Black Box' hi-fi record player, loaned to him by the local manufacturers. Members attending gave well-deserved thanks and applause to the Museum guides. Note that our meeting in early October features a special talk on the Composer, to be given by a member of the Britten/Pears Group.

27 June 2013 – Evening visit to St Bartholomew's Church at Corton – led by Michael Soanes

Surprisingly, the church looks to be situated some way north of Corton, but this is due to erosion in earlier centuries having removed a substantial northern, cliff-edge section of the village. Earlier maps clearly show buildings up to a point level with the church. The Colman influence of the later 1800s saw a number of substantial brick and tile cottages, built to a high standard, for employees in and around the village. Most of these remain in occupation today. Further infill building occurred after WW2, and also a new estate on land that was once used for allotments, but the continuing erosion prevents development near the cliffs and most cliff-top residences are classed as 'at risk' today.

Michael is the history recorder for Corton and has a wealth of knowledge on the village and the church. Meeting us outside the church he began the evening with a short history, saying that it was probably quite small in Norman times, and in the late 1100s had links with Leiston Abbey. Floor tiles have been found dating from the mid-1300s. The tower was constructed between 1440 and 1480 and its single bell is dated 1506. In 1645, incumbent James Utting was unfairly ejected and replaced by a Parliamentary substitute for a few years, but effectively there was no incumbent from about 1650 until regular clergyman Abraham Showell came in 1745. During that period of neglect, essential services (burials etc.) were conducted by visiting clergy. The decayed nave roof fell in somewhere between 1680 and 1690, but there was no will, nor means to repair it. Faithful worshippers then held services in the chancel, while certain other parishioners treated the ruined nave as a

quarry for building stone. In the 1970s, Manor Farm, on the cliff, was demolished to allow the building of Corton Beach holiday camp, and local archaeologists including Michael Soanes, Paul Durbidge and David Butcher were on hand to reclaim a quantity of carved masonry that had been taken from the church by an early lay rector, and used in the farm foundations. The best of the rescued material now forms a montage inside the modern meeting room (narthex) constructed during the 1980s within the ruined walls of the nave. Recognisable in the montage are small, carved figures of St John the Baptist and St Bartholomew, plus large panels probably from a decorative font plinth. Some early stonework remains in the chancel tracery, and some Norman masonry, and parts of 15th-century windows on the south side of the nave. Rams heads (in distressed condition) remain, low down at the entrance with scratch dials nearby. The main church is reached via the narthex, through a low doorway, revealing a few pews facing the font and the chancel arch. Five original carved pew ends are preserved at the foot of the north wall, and the rood loft stairway remains in good condition in the wall opposite, although the rood is no more. The typical East Anglian late 14th/early 15th-century font features carved shields with angels and lions, fortunately preserved when plastered over in the 17th-century. The Altar of Our Lady is a modern replacement of a long-lost medieval one, and nearby is a screen of fairly late date to hide the feet of worshippers in the chancel. The inside roof dates from an 1870 refurbishment. The majority of the glass in the church is plain but there are a few small, ancient decorative panels in some parts of the tracery. Our guide revealed there are plans to enhance some of the chancel glazing when opportunity allows. The east window, of mid to late 15th-century date replaces a smaller 14th-century original. An elegant, decorative stone surround to the Piscina and Sedilia has been reconstructed, to the original design, incorporating some original sections found at Manor Farm. The Reredos, now flanked by the village war memorials, is also very fine and was built in the 1500s from a bequest. Benefactors to St Bartholomew's include the Briggs family, with burials in the church, and who also feature at Salle, Norfolk. The prominent local Fowler family having connections in the local clergy, were strong supporters in the 19th-century.

One gem, substantially complete in a north-side chancel window reveal, is the only surviving original gable cross in Suffolk. Beautifully sculpted, with the crucifixion on the (original) east side and the Virgin and Child on the reverse (west) side, it was taken down from the chancel roof in 1891 for preservation. Also around that date, sufficient funds were granted to renovate the chancel, but this had to be at the expense of the nave. The tower remains solid, but is in need of some refurbishment and pointing – its open window spaces above the bell chamber give free access to the four winds while allowing fine sea and coastal views to those lucky enough to have climbed to that level.

Those who had pre-booked went on after the church visit to enjoy a meal at the Wherry Hotel in Oulton Broad, a new venue for us, booked by Jenny and voted a real success. Thank you Jenny for arranging all the details.

Four newly published books that should be of interest to Members

Boydell & Brewer, local academic publishers, have just released two local history titles. They will allow a helpful 25% discount to our members – note that this discount offer ends on 29 November 2013.

Minute Books of the Suffolk Humane Society edited by Robert Malster.

The Suffolk Humane Society was formed in 1806 after the pattern of the Royal Humane Society of London, its purpose being to reward those who saved their fellows from drowning and those who resuscitated people who had apparently died. The following year it undertook the financing and administration of the Lowestoft lifeboat *Frances Ann*, the world's first sailing lifeboat and one of the most successful early lifesaving craft in Britain . The documents edited here illuminate life in a maritime town in the nineteenth century. They show rewards for those conducting rescues from the sea, and the operations of the lifeboats at Lowestoft and Pakefield in rich and fascinating detail.

ISBN: 978 1 84383 805 0 (168 pages, 11 B&W images) Cost with 25% discount applied: £18.75 (Usually £25)

East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages edited by David Bates & Robert Liddiard.

East Anglia was a distinctive English region during the Middle Ages, but owed much of its character and identity to its place in a wider "North Sea World" stretching from the English Channel to Iceland, the Baltic and beyond. Relations between East Anglia and its maritime neighbours have been mostly peaceful, involving migration and commercial, artistic, architectural and religious exchanges, but at times marred by violence. This collection of essays discusses East Anglia in the context of this maritime framework and explores the extent to which there was a distinctive community bound together by the shared frontier of the North Sea during the Middle Ages.

ISBN: 978 1 84383 846 3 (368 pages, 84 images) Cost with 25% discount applied: £45 (Usually £60)

Orders: can be placed by phone on 01394 610600, by fax on 01394 610316, by email at trading@boydell.co.uk or on-line at www.boydellandbrewer.com

Postage: is £3.00 in the UK. When an order is placed, please quote the offer code **13188** to ensure that the discount is given. (The discount code applies to both the above titles)

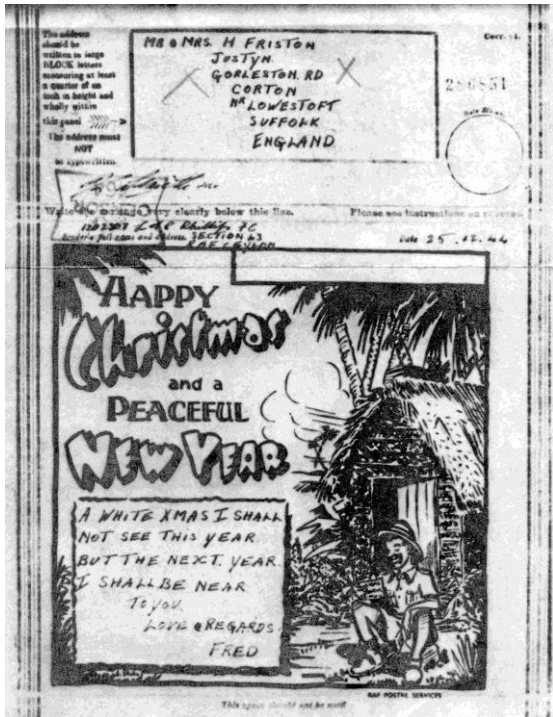
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‘Just a Few Lines...’ published by author Maurice Gowen

The author's father saved and brought home some 300 Airgraph messages that have now been transcribed into an evocative and moving family record. This book puts historians in touch with a largely forgotten wartime service.

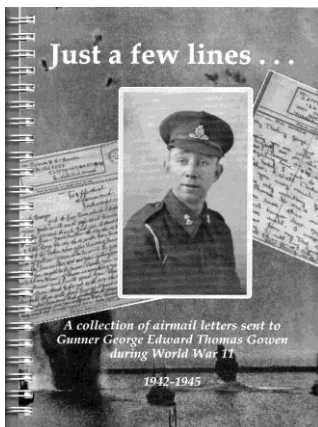
During World War II there was a real need for messages of comfort and reassurance to flow between armed forces posted overseas and their families in the UK. Normally sent by surface mail, these could in the worst cases take months to arrive, a time made insupportable by the closure of the Suez Canal, forcing ships to take the long sea route around Africa. Fortunately there was a useful alternative, first developed jointly during the 1930s by Eastman Kodak and Imperial Airways, and after the onset of war refined and adopted by the UK Post Office. In this, the sender filled out a short message with address details on a pre-printed standard form. This was handed in with payment at the local Post Office and forwarded to a central copying office where, no doubt after a censor check, the form was photographed onto 16mm film. The processed films, each carrying up to 1000 messages, were flown by the RAF to appropriate reception offices overseas where they were enlarged and printed out at roughly 4in x 5in size before being enveloped and despatched to the recipient. The film weighed only a fraction of the surface mail and the air delivery was fast, thus cutting the average delivery time to as little as two weeks in some cases. Another real advantage was that should a delivery go astray, the film was available to produce a replacement. Serving forces could reply using the same system (also subject to censorship).

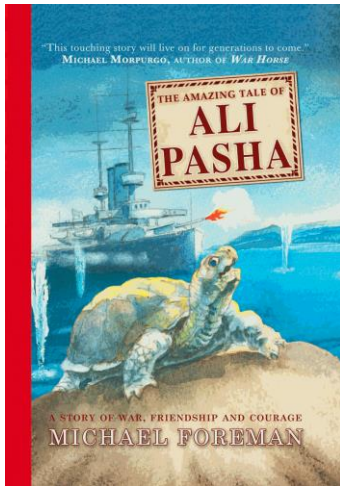
Book obtainable at £4.00 + £1 P&P (size A5 approx) – email: mga@gowen01.wanadoo.co.uk for details



Left: Airmail sent to Don Friston's parents from a relative serving in RAF Ceylon in late 1944.

In today's world of collecting and dealing in wartime memorabilia, there is a growing market for Airmails, particularly those sent from remote military locations and those dealing with limited campaigns.





Templar Publishing are releasing a new colour book where its well-known artist and writer*, born in Pakefield, has chosen for his subject, and superb drawings, an unlikely link between Corton Village and Gallipoli, in Turkey.

*Michael Foreman is the award-winning author of *War Boy* and *War Game*.

'The Amazing Tale of Ali Pasha' by Michael Foreman. Based on true events, many recorded in Henry Friston's diary from the First World War.

Henry was born in 1894 at Corton, Suffolk. In 1913 he volunteered for the Royal Navy, and inevitably went on active service at the start of WWI. Serving as able seaman on the battleship *HMS Implacable* he ended up at the Dardanelles action in 1915. Working ashore, to assist with the withdrawal of injured troops from the beaches, he found a live tortoise and took it on board ship, naming it *Ali Pasha*. This dramatised story tells of war, friendship and courage, and what happened after *Ali* was brought home to Corton and gradually became a reptile celebrity, eventually outliving Henry his life-long friend and captor.

ISBN: 978 1 84877 999 0 (Hard cover, 128 pages, illustrated throughout)

Cost: £12.99 (from all main booksellers)

Annual Report: Ray Collins has copies of this year's Annual Report for sale to members at just £2.00.

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