

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

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Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2014

13 Feb 2014 "Medieval Legacy in the East Anglian landscape – pt 2" by Derek Leake, a continuation of this automated slide and sound show.

27 Feb 2014 "The Lowestoft Players" by Society President, Malcolm Berridge, who raises the curtain on our local dramatic entertainment team.

13 Mar 2014 "More secrets from the Anglo-Saxons" Joanna Caruth reveals further details of the archaeological dig at RAF Lakenheath.

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 Report

To continue on from last month's report, on the subject of what was going on in Lowestoft in 1914, I have been reviewing the *Lowestoft Journal* and Canon Bignold's *Carlton Colville Chronicles*.

There were a number of venues offering various entertainment being advertised in the *Lowestoft Journal* in July 1914, such as the Hippodrome, Palace, Cosy Corner, Marina, Sparrow's Nest, Claremont Pier & Olympian Gardens. The circus was in town, as Ginnett's Royal Circus had set up in Church Road.

At the Palace, a film was being shown of the White Heavyweight Championship of the World fight, between George Carpentier and Gunboat Smith, which had taken place at Olympia in London two days earlier. (*The White Heavyweight Championship had been set up when the 'White Hopes' of the time had failed for four and a half years to wrest the World title from African-American champion Jack Johnson.*) Smith lost to the European heavyweight champion Carpentier in a bout that had a purse of £9,000. Carpentier was the last person to hold the World White Heavyweight crown. He joined the French military at the outbreak of war.

On 18 July the *Journal* reported that the Norfolk & Suffolk Infantry Brigade Territorials were at their two-week annual training camp at Holkham Hall. There being 2,264 men of all ranks involved in the training. A week later the Norfolk & Suffolk Cyclists Battalion made camp at the Pakefield Range. There were 750 men from the Cyclists Battalion, plus 120 from the East Anglian Supply and Transport Company, who were there to see to the supplies.

The impending threat of war did not deter the Mutford & Lothingland and North Suffolk Agricultural Association from holding their annual show at Gorleston at the end of July.

However, on the first Sunday in August there were large congregations in the various places of worship. In the time of trouble the people had instinctively turned to the church to pray that war might be averted.

Following the Declaration of War, the *Journal* ran a feature on page 5. In September an article covered an appeal from Lord Kitchener to ex-NCO's of any branch of the Forces, up to the age of 45, to re-enlist for the duration of the war. They were wanted immediately as Instructors for the Army. Those over 45 could also apply for service at home only, if they proved competent as Drill Instructors. Canon Bignold recorded that on 20 August, 530 men of the 25th London Cyclists were quartered in the parish with their Headquarters at St Mark's Institute. (*Before 1919 the parish of Carlton Colville extended as far as Mutford Lock and Kirkley Run.*)

In mid September the Town Council had a very important matter on the agenda when they approved an extension to the Town Hall. The following month, Canon Bignold recorded that between 2,000 and 3,000 refugees from Belgium had arrived in the Town to escape the horrors of the war, many in open fishing boats. He had seen 18 of these boats arrive.

By November, 155 men from the parish of Carlton had joined the colours. Not only were casualties being reported from the front, for also in November nine fishermen died at sea, their vessels blown up by mines.

Ron Ashman – Chairman

Winter Meal (Tuesday 25 February): Please remember to take a slip on the night, recording your menu selection

Recent talks and meetings

23 January 2014 – "Just over the border" – by Terry Weatherley

Terry based his talk on a previous similar experience of the 'Churches Cycle ride' in Suffolk – this time he ventured across the River Waveney into Norfolk. He showed a variety of colour slides, mostly taken by himself but some were drawn, with permission, from Simon Knott's excellent *Norfolk Churches* website.

Due to the distances involved a lift was arranged to the start point at Sisland, a sparsely populated area just inland of Loddon. There Terry and his companion cyclist for the day were welcomed to St Mary's church. Except for the thatch, this church with its fine shuttered tower, and squirrel on the weathervane, would not have been out of place in a New England setting. Just beside the present church are interesting remains of an earlier one, struck by lightning during a service in 1761. The church was immediately rebuilt reusing the former north wall. Today its whitewashed and neat interior contains a font with signs of the four evangelists, a fine east window and a beautiful wood carving.

Next port of call was nearby Loddon, which has two churches. Here, both congregations have a novel arrangement whereby they meet at the Methodist church in the winter, and in the Parish church in summer. They also share their buildings with the local Roman Catholics. Our cyclists signed in at St John's Methodist chapel, where historical links go back to the famous John Wesley. Not far away is the imposing Holy Trinity Parish Church. Sir James Hobart rebuilt this fine monument, in perpendicular style in 1486, and it has a large porch with flushwork and battlements – a carving representing the Trinity (discovered during restoration, hidden under the floorboards) is displayed in a niche. Clerestory windows allow ample light to the impressive interior with its glorious font, and interesting monuments; there is a beautiful window, plus the remaining lower half of the rood screen with a series of 15th-century paintings of the nativity, and a fine Hobart brass on the chancel floor.

The ride continued eastwards to Heckingham, a predominantly farming region with few houses. The Norman church stands on a small knoll not far from Heckingham Hall. This thatched church is dedicated to St Gregory and, like its neighbour at Hales, has a semicircular apse. The lower third of the solid flint tower is round, showing some repairs and the later, more slender polygonal upper part, has red brick corner joints. A wonderful Norman doorway, described as one of the most perfect examples, has five tiers of decoration by a master mason. The Tournai-style font was once covered (seen in an early illustration) and a photo shows the church possessed box pews.

Norton Subcourse, a small village mentioned in Domesday, came next. Here, St Mary's church has a solid, tapering round tower with 13th-century bell openings. The body of this church was rebuilt in the 1380s when secular priests were transferred from Raveningham. The simple interior has a chancel beam; there are signs of a blocked east end door, and a curious window alcove above it. The substantial font is supported on multiple pillars and a two-tiered base, and both sedilia and piscina on the south side are ornate.

The route went on to St Mathias at Thorpe-next-Haddiscoe (Mathias being the disciple chosen to replace Judas) the church here overlooking the marshes. The small nave is thatched but the chancel, rebuilt in brick, has a slate roof. The round tower is mostly Norman with blind arcading around the outside. There is a genuine Norman window, now blocked. Inside the church stands a very old Norman font of Purbeck marble also with blind arcading. A small brass plate with pre-Reformation inscription in Latin has lettering decorated with scrolls and flicks; the same hand appears in several other local brasses. Low attendances mean this church is now under threat of immediate closure.

Thurlton (not Thurton) came next – here the church of All Saints is much larger, to suit the surrounding population; unusually, entry here is via the north door, sometimes known as the Devil's door. North doors are often blocked. The church has an unused south door, surmounted by a handsome arch having three tiers of decoration. The nave contains the screen, minus its panels, and a full-length wall-painting of St Christopher, staff in hand and Christ child on his shoulder. The inner doorway is wonderful with a Trinity at its apex and angels in the spandrels.

Now travelling west, they reached Raveningham where St Andrew's church stands within the Estate. The church walls are mainly covered by memorials to the Bacon family, set in imitation Early-English arcading, installed in 1820, and styled after what may have been the founder's tomb in the south side of the chancel. The door has elaborate ironwork and one panel of the font shows a seated bishop. A fine floor brass records Margaret Castell, one of Richard III's squires who died in 1483 – at her feet is a dragon, and a little dog peeps from under her skirts.

At Hales stands the thatched church of St Margaret; it runs Heckingham close for the title of most beautiful Norman church in the county, and it certainly has the most surviving original fabric. Also round towered, and with a semicircular apse (the latter with blind arcading), its Norman door is almost the twin of that at Heckingham. Inside the tower is a splayed window retaining the imprint of the basket around which it was formed. The church contains an interesting wall-painting of St James the Greater, Patron Saint of Spain.

Just over a mile away, across the A146 at Stockton, is the church of St Michael. Yet another round tower, but this time topped by a spire. The neat roof contrasts with the somewhat weathered fabric of the walls. The brick porch has a Dutch gable and inside, the nave and chancel are all one with a step to delineate the choir – there are some 13th- and 14th-century windows. Fragments of medieval glass remain set within modern windows; an arch-braced roof springs from the hefty wall plate. The font has a crocketed cover, and one bench end sports a finely carved hound.

The last church visited on the cycle ride was St Mary at Ditchingham whose massive, stepped, square flint tower is visible for miles around. The Victorian-restored interior is dark, but the chancel roof, painted by the vicar's wife is stunningly beautiful. A vast black marble war memorial dominates the interior and, unusually, lists a nurse among the soldiers. Brasses to Philip and Margaret Bozard include images of their children. There are some memorials to the Haggard family, local farmers and churchwardens. Scenes from the life of Rider Haggard, the famous author, appear in the windows including the pyramids, his home in Africa, and a view of Bungay from near his home.