

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

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Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2014

23 Jan 2014 "Just Over the Border – some churches of south Norfolk" by Terry Weatherley, one of our regular speakers, who turns his attention northwards for this talk.

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.

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

I hope you all had a nice Christmas and that you have a prosperous New Year. I would also like to welcome you back to our programme of talks and hope you enjoy those to come.

As this year is the centenary of the start of World War 1, I wondered what the people of Lowestoft were doing at the beginning of 1914.

For entertainment there was the pantomime 'Dick Whittington and his Cat'.

For young men and women there was the opportunity to start a new life 'down under' in Australia.

In a January edition of the Lowestoft Journal there was a special feature about assisted immigration for British farm labourers, lads between the ages of 16 and 20 years and domestic servants to Australia. Every assisted person was to have a definite Government guarantee of employment upon arrival in either Victoria or New South Wales. Work with good employers was said to await them when they landed in Australia. A thought that came to me was how many of these young men soon found themselves in khaki being shipped back to Europe to fight, and probably die, in that war.

In Carlton Colville in June, six members of the 1st Carlton (St Mark's) Troop of Sea Scouts who drowned when their boat capsized on the Waveney, near Somerleyton bridge, were buried in the Carlton New Churchyard.



Still on the subject of World War 1, but at the end of that war, one of our members recently asked if I knew for what event the medal shown above had been issued.

Around the rim of the medal are the words: "**To Commemorate the Allied Victory in the Great War**", and in the centre are the Lowestoft Town crest, the dates of the war, and the inscription "H.R. Boardley Mayor 1919".

On the other side are a soldier and a sailor, and a crown. Although between the soldier and the sailor a small aircraft is pictured, the RAF is not represented. Having been formed on 1st April 1918 as an independent part of the military it's possible that they were still considered by some to be part of the Army or Navy.

There was a Peace Celebration in Lowestoft on 19th July 1919, that was organised by the Mayor, Cllr Boardley, to commemorate the allied victory in the Great War.

The armistice had been agreed on 11th November 1918, but a formal state of war between the two sides persisted for another seven months, until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, with Germany, on 28 June 1919.

The Lowestoft Journal carried an article relating to the Peace Celebration on 19th July with a timetable of events. Following the parades in the morning, at 2.00pm the timetable read: "Children to attend their respective schools, where flags and Commemorative Medals will be presented"

This, I believe, was one of those Commemorative Medals. *Ron Ashman* – Chairman

Recent talks and meetings

14 November 2013 – "Mutford Half Hundred – A Domesday Evaluation" – by David Butcher

The Domesday Survey gives an insight into Mutford Half-hundred, in terms of agronomic structure and land-use. It also provides some sense of social organisation, enabling us to see what bound tenants to a lord, while allowing others more freedom. Some of the information collected reveals aspects of the landscape still detectable – over 900 years later. Even heavily urbanised communities are able to cultivate a sense of how much has changed over the centuries. This book is a companion for *The Island of Lothingland: a Domesday and Hundred Roll Handbook*, published in 2012. The style of tabulation used, also the explanatory notes, place-name etymology, related local topography, and overview of manorial structure is common to both volumes, but with no readily available Hundred Roll material to draw upon, David has used a selection of medieval

references to describe activities of the Mutford half-hundred's inhabitants during the three centuries following Domesday. With Mutford being less than half the area of Lothingland, and having half the number of settlements, he could carry out different analytical exercises largely relating to land-use, and was able to research the local manorial structure in greater detail and to investigate more closely the activities of the residents. Peter Warner, in *The Origins of Suffolk*, p. 156, remarked that the two entities should really be regarded as one – but Lake Lothing and Oulton Broad create a major topographical division, and have resulted in Lothingland's area (38.5 square miles) being more than twice that of Mutford's (16.6).

Formal unification of the two half-hundreds did not take place until 1763, and was brought about as a means of maintaining the poor people they contained. In one sense, a unity had existed much earlier, because both half-hundreds shared a sheriff's court, held in April/May and again in October, at Mutford Bridge, close to the site of the present-day public house, *The Commodore*. Mutford is an ancient name derived from two Old English words: *mōt*, meaning "meeting", and *ford*, meaning "shallow place in water". Two volumes of the court's activities survive for the years 1590-4 and 1594-1612 and show that it was largely concerned with the election of officers, and cases of misdemeanour, also to take stock of the *tithing-groups*, and to collect various *customary* payments due to the Crown from tenants. In general, the English *hundred* consisted of one hundred *hides* of arable land (the 120-acre *hide*, was in Norman times termed a *carucate*). Lothingland Half-hundred had about fifty-two hides, according to the Domesday Survey, and Mutford about twenty-seven – which leaves both areas, when added together, somewhat short of the average.

Who was the Anglo-Saxon family-head or tribal-leader who settled in this area? Perhaps the description of a stentorian voice, in his name, was applied to the area. Lothing is comprised of two elements: an Old English word *hluda* and a diminutive of similar origins, *ing* – meaning "descendants of". Thus, we have "the descendants of Hluda". Lake Lothing perpetuates him still in what later became the parish of Lowestoft (*Hlodver's toft*). It would seem that the land to its south, stretching as far as the River Hundred, was also associated with the eponymous leader, but not truly considered as part of his domain as it abutted the Wangford and Blything hundreds.

The purpose of the great inquest of 1086, of which the Mutford data forms one tiny part, is still debated. Was it simply a tax return, enabling William I to know the serviceable value of the *warland* under his own jurisdiction, and also additional land held by his minions? Or was it a survey of the economic state of the country, assessing the differences between the England of Edward the Confessor and the country, as it was, twenty years after the Conquest? Did it have a political purpose? Was it a means of assessing regional ability to support the quartering and provisioning of troops, if required? Or was it, in its sheer scope and scale, an audit of the state of the nation.

A good deal of the material in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 derives from an article entitled *The Half-hundred of Mutford: a Domesday Investigation*, which was published in *Suffolk Review*, New Series 58 (Spring 2012). Revision of the data has since been carried out, with necessary corrections made, and a great deal of supplementary material added. The result is a work intended not only to create an analysis of a defined area of north-east Suffolk at a particular point in its development, but to provide a collection of material for anyone wishing to carry out his or her own research into the eight surviving communities which are to be found there. Statistics are mainly given in digit-form, in the notes accompanying the tables in Chapter One (as well as in other parts of the text), in order to achieve clarity and impact, and use is made of italic and bold fonts to represent specialist terminology and key-words in text. By employing such presentational techniques, it is hoped that the commentary will be easier to read and yield its information more readily. The three appendices and the glossary are meant to provide back-up to the preceding chapters.

28 November 2013 – "Corton Village from Victorian Times" – by Don Friston

This talk by Don gave the story of his ancestors' migration eastwards from Wingfield, in Suffolk. Some records there of the family, then named Freestone, date from the 1500s but it was the late 1700s before they had a strong base in the 'Saints' near Bungay, mainly working as farm labourers. Don's great great grandfather Samuel was born at South Elmham St Cross in 1810. He married a Benacre girl in 1832 and they appear in the Hopton 1841 census with six children, listed under the name Friston, probably due to the enumerator's error, as Samuel and his eldest son were spelt Samuale, and Emma (youngest daughter) as Emmer. The family name in East Suffolk switched between Freestone and Friston for a number of years. In 1861 the Hopton census showed them living in Warren Lane (the cottages are extant) without Samuel junior. He was married and at Mill Lane, Corton, with his wife Mary (nee Took) and young family. In 1866 disaster came, as Samuel junior was lost at sea when the fishing boat *Linnet* sank in a storm with no trace ever found of vessel or crew. A punched and embossed funeral

card exists from his Corton memorial service. With no main breadwinner, George, his eldest son (and Don's grandfather) was sent to work, aged nine, as a horse-boy. He walked to a Blundeston farm seven days per week for 1s. 6d. plus his Sunday dinner.

The people of Corton, a quiet seaside village in the 1860s, worked mainly at farming and fishing, in season. There was a small school, two farms and a corn mill in the centre of the village, where most of the cottages were to be found – the main street ran parallel to the cliff with the parish church at the northern extremity. In 1869 dramatic changes were to take place. This was due to the purchase of a house at the south end, on the cliff-top, by wealthy Jeremiah Colman, the youngest partner in the large Norwich Mill producing the famous Colmans Mustard. He and his wife Caroline loved the quiet seaside around Lowestoft and had a minimum taste for city life. They saw their new Corton house with its uninterrupted sea views as the perfect home, and moved in with their children during autumn 1869. Immediately they made plans to invest heavily in the house and the village. Within four years they tripled the size of the house, renaming it *The Clyffe*, and bought more land to its north and south, soon to be planted with rare trees and shrubs. (Mrs Colman hated formal flower beds and geometric borders.) They built the Chapel in The Street near to the house and a series of new, brick and tile houses to accommodate some of their employees. To protect their investment, they funded a sea wall and defences for the village and their own property, parts of which remain today. Don's family had saved photos and printed items that he used to illustrate the above developments.

During the building frenzy in Corton, George Friston continued as a farm horseman, being a strong young adult, but he then suffered a serious accident. When driving a wagonload of corn to Lowestoft Railway Station, the horses ran away while descending Pleasurewood Hill – he was knocked down and an iron-tired wagon wheel crushed his arm. George slowly recovered at Lowestoft hospital but never regained full use of the arm. Able to do only light work he found a new job as one of the gardeners at *The Clyffe*, working for the Colmans. While in hospital he had fallen for his nurse, Mary Fowler, and, when released, pursued her relentlessly. Determined she was to become his wife, he saw off a rival boyfriend and reclaimed a painting she had given the rival as a keepsake. They married in 1887 and lived in Mill Lane near to or with his widowed mother, soon starting their own family. In September 1894 Mary produced a boy she named Henry, who was to be Don's father. Early in 1895, the family were moved to the recently built Hawthorn Lodge, opposite the Colman's entrance gate, and about that time George was promoted to head gardener. George and Mary's tenancy agreement was protected (by J. Colman) for the rest of their natural life.

In March 1895, the newly formed Parish Council discussed the school, as its offices (toilets) had been condemned, and the sixty-year-old building was too small for the number of children then in the village. Chairman Jeremiah Colman had plenty of ideas – he offered to buy the current school for £500 and to give a suitable piece of his property within the village for building a replacement. The Vicar, part of whose job was to appoint the school teaching staff, offered to manage a fund-raising scheme, starting it immediately with his personal donation of £50. The April issue of the parish magazine showed the first list of subscribers, and details of the campaign appeared monthly until the school opened in February 1896. The Colman ladies commissioned a handwritten list of the donations, and the now fragile original is still held among the village records. Sadly, Mrs Caroline Colman died in July 1895, halfway through the construction of the school. Don showed photographs of the original school, and the new school in build, together with contemporary images of his family and their school class. Don's father Henry left school in 1908, aged 13, and worked under his father for five years as a trainee gardener. He joined the Royal Navy in 1913 and served on the battleship HMS *Implacable* in the Gallipoli Campaign during WWI.

The Colmans brought many benefits to Corton by acquiring surrounding farms and employing local labour during their thirty-year sojourn. Their financial investment was very generous, and besides supporting the school and Free Methodist Chapel, including the choir for the latter, they generally encouraged temperance, and a strong religious and moral lifestyle for residents. Numerous visitors came to visit them at *The Clyffe*, amongst who were Prime Minister Gladstone, Sir James Paget, and several leading Ministers of Religion – some of the visitors contributed to the new school fund. Jeremiah Colman's family helped the Volunteer Life-saving Rocket Crew (see below) and provided a Village Room, and Café with a bowling green. They gave Christmas gifts to their employees and Mrs Colman organised lying-in kits for expectant mothers. This period of growth and good fortune in the village was sadly cut short, as two years after the death of Mrs Colman, their son Alan died of consumption in Egypt, having been sent there in the hope that the heat would help his condition. Jeremiah died the following year aged 68. The remaining Colman family, based in Norwich, did not have the same attachment to Corton – so *The Clyffe* was demolished, its fabric sold for re-use locally, and the estate gradually run down,

being mostly sold off in 1921. The Fristons survive in Suffolk, but not in Corton – Hawthorn Lodge, currently up for sale, remains in fine condition.



The Corton Volunteer Rocket Life-saving Crew – Inspection Day 1911 – George Friston is in centre with bowler hat and white shirt.