

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

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Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2014

11 Sept 2014 "Georgian History of the Fisher Theatres" – Sarah Hirons gives an insight into the origins and successful development of these theatres in East Anglia.

25 Sept 2014 "Down in the Drink – Planes over and in the sea off Lowestoft"
– Bob Collis and Simon Baker relate local wartime incidents and accidents.

9 Oct 2014 "Overpaid, Oversexed and Over Here!" – Ian McLachlan provides an account of the American servicemen who served at air bases in East Anglia during World War 2.

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 would like to welcome all those renewing their membership, and all new members, to a series of talks that promises to be both interesting and varied. I hope you all had a good summer and are looking forward to the coming season. The AGM was well attended and the committee has seen some changes, please see the following extracts. If any member knows of a good speaker, or has a subject they would like to have featured in a talk, then please let our Programme Secretary know.

Marilyn Duerden – Chairman

22 May 2014 – Extracts from the LA & LHS Annual General Meeting

These are the approved changes to Officers and Committee: Ron Ashman stood down, having completed his three-year term of office as Chairman. Marilyn Duerden was elected as our new Chairman. with Rodney Duerden as Vice-Chairman. Marilyn thanked Ron for all his work over the past three years. Jenny Hatton retired as Programme Secretary and Richard Mundy was elected to that position. Both Jenny and Ron will remain on the Committee.

The new Committee is: Marilyn Duerden – Chairman Rodney Duerden – Vice Chairman

Irene Ashman – Secretary Ray Collins – Treasurer Richard Mundy – Programme Secretary
Don Friston – Newsletter Editor Ron Ashman – Committee member Jenny Hatton – Committee member
Janis Kirby – Committee member John Knowles – Committee member

Treasurer's Report: Although the Society's current expenditure slightly exceeded income, it was agreed that the annual subscription should remain unchanged for the coming year.

Recent talks and meetings

8 May 2014 – "Great Yarmouth's Historic Town Wall" – by Maurice Joel

Great Yarmouth has an outstanding town wall, surviving sections of which represent one of the best remaining medieval examples in the country. Although it has lost its many gates, much of the wall still stands, sometimes incorporated into later buildings or haphazardly interspersed with modern day constructions. Some of the most impressive remains are at the southern end near to the Time and Tide Museum.

During the medieval period Yarmouth became an important east coast port. In 1261 the town was granted the right to build a town wall, with a moat, by King Edward III. This was a mammoth undertaking for all of the town residents, taking them many years to raise the money and even longer to build the wall. In total it took over 100 years to complete as there was a delay part way through (due to an outbreak of plague) that wiped out some two-thirds of the population. Each person had to work for a set number of days per year – though if you were wealthy you could pay someone else to do your share. The wall was constructed on three sides of the town, with the River Yare providing the west boundary. The materials used were mainly found nearby, hence the use of pebbles and flint, but the loopholes and ornamental work were made of Caen stone. When completed it was more than a mile long, over 23 feet high, and had ten gates and fifteen towers. Internally the wall was sustained by a series of arches within each of which was a splayed loophole for the use of cross-bowmen. The arches supported a walkway for those who defended the town, enabling them to shoot from the upper and smaller loopholes and to pass from tower to tower. The arches were also used for storage. At the wall's southern extremity a boom was placed across the river to prevent invasion from the sea. In the end only a small section of the moat was completed.

The main gates were to the north and south, with intermediate gates spaced along the east wall facing the sea. Outside the wall, on the beach, were a number of windmills. Although the gates have gone there are still eleven towers to be seen. The reason so much of the wall is visible today is due to earlier inhabitants having attached their houses to either side of it. When these crumbling houses were demolished the sturdy wall was revealed again.

In the 14th century Great Yarmouth supplied 40 vessels to Edward III, a large proportion of the fleet that was involved in the sea battle of Sluys. By contrast, London supplied only 23 vessels. Yarmouth's Coat of Arms dates from this time, when the King permitted the town to merge his heraldic royal Lions with the Yarmouth herrings. Hence the Coat of Arms features three Lions having herring bodies and tails.

The first tower to be built, in 1284, was King Henry's Tower. At 50 feet this was the highest, and was originally used as a navigation aid (today the tower is reduced to 25 feet). Nearby stands St Nicholas Church, the largest parish church in England. The church once had a spire but this was struck by lightning in 1819 and was not rebuilt. In the corner of its churchyard once stood a Benedictine Priory. Part of this was later used as a school, appropriately called Priory School. The Pudding Gate is believed so named because this was where animals were slaughtered and the blood used to make black pudding. The town authority had moved all of the slaughterhouses to the east wall to keep the mess away from the market. The St Mary's (or Hospital) Tower was used as a small hospital and later as a workhouse. Near this tower, but outside the wall, was the Dissenters' graveyard from which bodies were often dug up and sent to London for medical research purposes. The Guard Tower was the middle tower along the east wall and home to a small garrison (it was a place where the guard was changed). This small tower remains in the wall within the middle of the Market Gates shopping complex. The present day building that contains the BHS store also uses the town wall as part of its structure. At the end of this stood Oxney's Gate that led out to what is Regent Road today. A later building near the west end of St. George's Road has absorbed the ravelin that was constructed in 1559. A ravelin is a triangular fortification that enables defenders to direct their fire along the defence wall upon an attacking enemy. The Harris Tower, near to St Peters church, had a house built on top of it as a vicar's residence.

In the 16th century a great part of the wall was rampired, or backed up with earth, to strengthen it particularly against attack by cannon balls. The Garden Gate, at the end of Alma Road, was demolished in 1776, and had the Jews' Cemetery beside it on the outside of the wall (Jews were not considered to be part of the accepted faith). The South East tower had a house built on top of it in the 16th century. The tower next to the Ernie Child's Pottery is different to the others in that it has a chequer pattern decoration on the upper half. The wall at this end had at one stage been completely hidden as houses had been built on each side of it.

The Blackfriars Tower was named after the adjacent Blackfriars monastery. At Palmers Tower (which once had a windmill built on top) the wall is now in a very bad state of repair. The South Gate was similar in construction to the North Gate, and later had a heliograph constructed on top. The heliograph was equipped with a type of

semaphore signalling, allowing the Admiralty in London to send messages quickly to the fleet at its various bases.

The North West tower was the last one to be built (in 1334) and still stands beside the River Bure. A bridge that spanned the river near this tower was the scene of a tragedy in 1845, when a crowd of people stood on top to watch a boat towed by geese pass underneath – as they all moved across to see it exit the other side, the shift in weight caused the bridge to collapse, resulting in 79 deaths. From this tower the wall ran along what is today Rampart Street as far as the North Gate (the wall and a tower forming that section were demolished many years ago). The North Gate had two towers, stout doors, and a portcullis that must have presented a fine sight to anyone approaching the town. The North Gate was demolished in 1837 and the only evidence remaining is in the name, Northgate Street. A leper colony was sited outside of the walls at this point.

21 May 2014 – "Members visit to The Great Hospital, Norwich"

The Great Hospital, built in 1249, is situated in the church of St Helen, in Bishopgate, Norwich. From the beginning it received donations of money, land and tenements, and continues to provide support and sheltered accommodation to less-well-off elderly residents of the City. Walter de Suffield was bishop of Norwich from 1245 to 1257 and established both church and hospital. The original intention was to build south of Bishopgate, but that land was found to be too wet. The hospital, founded for retired and sick male clergy of Norwich, did not offer medical care but allowed inmates to live out their days in some comfort. Clerics were unmarried in this period so lacked support in old age. The hospital also gave meals, shelter and clothing to poor scholars and sick and hungry paupers. There were no female residents – four nuns who, in the interest of propriety were all over the age of 50, supplied the care.

Originally the hospital was named after St Giles, patron saint of the poor and sick (said to have given away all his possessions to the poor, and cared for the sick). The good Bishop Suffield founded St Giles not only for the poor unfortunates but also to secure the remission of his sins. It was not uncommon then for rich men to be benefactors to works of charity they believed would guarantee their own spiritual health and ease their passing through Purgatory.

In medieval times this church was one of the largest buildings in Norwich. Only a small part of the original (the south porch) survives. The rest of the current church and hospital was constructed in the 14th and 15th centuries, the layout resembling that of a monastery or priory. The church has one of the smallest cloisters in England (constructed in 1450) and the latter is unusual, being on the north side. There was not enough room on the south as the church stands close to the road. West of the cloister is the refectory, with the Master's lodge to the north of this. The Chaplain's Dormitory is also north of the cloisters and it is thought that on the eastern side were the Chapter House and other small rooms, as indicated by various doorways in the cloister walk. Recently a new building containing a small shop and a communal room was opened and a neat well-tended garden established outside.

The tower was erected in 1375, after a bequest by John Derlington. He was Master of the hospital between 1372 and 1375. Bishop Henry Despenser had the chancel built in 1383, in time for the visit of King Richard II and his Queen, Anne of Bohemia. The magnificent chancel roof (said to have been completed in honour of Queen Anne) had 252 chestnut panels (*see below) each decorated with an eagle, thought to be the Austrian imperial emblem.

In about 1450, the nave of the church was walled off to create the Infirmary Hall in the west end. During the reformation the chancel was also blocked off from the church and named Eagle Ward. In the mid-1570s an upper floor was installed. The wards created by this became the home of female residents. *The upper level was originally an open ward – and it is where the chestnut roof panels can be seen today. The ceiling of Eagle Ward was restored in 1950 after suffering smoke damage for over 300 years from the fireplaces (this is the only church in England that has chimneys protruding from the roof) and later from Victorian oil lamps. During Victorian times screened cubicles were installed to give the ladies some privacy, with a small communal living room next to the fires at either end of the ward. In the beginning the ladies occupied one cubicle but later were allocated two, one being used as a bedroom the other as a living room. It is thought that the heat from a chimney built in the 1570s may have caused the decay to the fine tracery of the east window, now held in place by a stout metal frame. In 1979 the ward was closed and the residents moved to new purpose-built accommodation in the church grounds. Apparently, many were sad to leave their bed-sits in the old hospital.

In the nave there is a mace rest, and both box and bench pews. During an official ceremony, upon entering the church the mace and any ceremonial swords would be placed in the mace rest until the end of the service. On some of the bench pew ends are interesting 16th-century poppy head carvings – one pew end has St Margaret emerging from a dragon. Under the bench pews on the north side of the aisle is a shelf for the gentlemen to place their hats. The ladies sat on the south side of the aisle.

A small window high in the Infirmary wall, allowed the service to be viewed and relayed to patients in that ward. The transept's fine stone-vaulted ceiling has bosses of the nativity, ascension, resurrection, various saints and the twelve apostles, surrounding a central boss depicting the Virgin Mary. This remains a place of worship and contains a small piano having picture panels decorated in oriental style – it is believed it was made first for use on a ship.

In the refectory roof trusses are carved six dragons similar to one in Dragon Hall, Norwich. The refectory houses a gruesome looking goose quarterer, possibly also used to cut the swans bred by the Master of the Great Hospital for consumption on feast days. The original swan pit remains, adjoining the river. Swans were enclosed in the water-filled pit to be fattened for the table. The pit length was too short for the swans to take off and escape. On the wall of the refectory is a drawing of the swans' beak markings that specified their individual owners.

The tour ended with a visit to St Helen's House, in the grounds of the Great Hospital. Designed by Thomas Ivory (also designer of the Octagon, the Tabernacle and the Assembly House in Norwich) this house served as a private (medical) hospital prior to becoming part of the Great Hospital. In the church is a box pew for the Ivory family.



The church of St Helen and the Great Hospital

21 May 2014 – "Members visit to the Jarrold Printing Museum, Norwich"

Having first looked around the Great Hospital, after lunch the group visited the John Jarrold Printing Museum. The party was divided into two groups and each shown four stages of the printing process. These stages were composing, letterpress, lithography and binding. At each stage a different volunteer explained how the process was performed and how it had changed over the years.

The process of the printed word started in the mid-15th century when Johann Gutenberg, of Mainz in Germany, invented movable, interchangeable and re-usable type (earlier he had been a silversmith by profession). Gutenberg used a wooden press for his printing, probably adapted from a wine or cheese press. His printing ink was an oily varnish-like substance composed of soot, turpentine and walnut oil.

The first book to be produced using movable type was a Bible. It was said to contain about five million characters, based on letters used in the hand-written version by the scribes, using quill pens. Each of these characters was cast in metal, picked out by hand and assembled into lines ready for the printing process. Printing was a highly skilled and labour intensive process until advancing technology gradually brought the digital sophistication that exists today.

Printing was brought to England by William Caxton following his visit to Cologne in 1446 to see this new invention in the emerging German printing industry.

Part one of our visit to Jarrolds began in the *Composing Section*, where the early letterpress printing text was both assembled and corrected by hand. This was an elaborate and time-consuming activity as each word had to be set up from individual characters. The letters for each font were held in racks of wooden type-cases. The capital letters were stored in the cases at the top, hence they became the *upper case letters*, while minuscule letters were stored at the bottom and became the *lower case letters*.

When picking out letters from the case, the compositor used an adjustable tray (called a composing stick) to hold them. The stick was set to the required line width and was always held a certain way round. This gave rise to the expression *getting hold of the wrong end of the stick*. It must be remembered that the trainee also had to cope with the letters being back to front and upside down in the stick, also learning the 'layout' of the case. The type-case compartments were sized and positioned according to the frequency of letters used in the language, and not in alphabetical order. Line spacing was adjusted by adding thin typemetal strips, (made in varying thickness), between the lines of text. After the job was printed all text had to be distributed (dissed), i.e. returned to the correct boxes in the type-case, ready for future use. This use of movable type set by hand remained unchanged for about 400 years.

Systems for typesetting by machine tested early in the 19th-century were unsuccessful, but in the late 1880s two mechanical typesetting systems appeared, 'Monotype' and 'Linotype', both using keyboards. Monotype produced a punched tape that when fed into a hot-metal caster created words in lines of single letters – Linotype cast words directly into single lines (slugs) of the correct line width and was mainly used by newspapers. Both machines greatly increased the output of typesetters. Pictures were hand-cut wood or metal engravings that were pinned onto blocks level with the print surface of the text type.

Part two of the tour covered the *Letterpress Printing* process. The museum has a good range of letterpress machines, and a demonstration of single page printing was given on the cast iron Albion hand printing press. The text was placed on a tray, inked up by roller, gently covered by the paper and tympanum, and wound in beneath the metal top plate of the press. Pulling the main handle forced the plate down, pressing the paper firmly onto the text (hence letterpress). Over many years the machinery had improved, and after viewing a variety of presses we ended this section with a demonstration of the more modern Heidelberg auto platen.

Jarrolds were involved with printing in and around Woodbridge in the early 1800s. They moved to London Street, Norwich in 1823 and the family always embraced new printing methods, much later including *Lithography*, the subject of part three of our tour. This method of printing is based on the principle that grease does not mix with water. Originally the image was drawn in reverse with a wax crayon onto a flat, smooth limestone plate. The stone was then treated with a mixture of acid and gum Arabic that etched away the surface areas not protected by wax. When the stone was moistened the etched areas retained the water; an oil-based ink could then be applied which, repelled by the water, stuck only to the original drawing and could then be printed in positive onto paper or card. Later a thin, lightweight metal plate replaced the heavy stone. The plate was coated with photosensitive emulsion, a negative film image placed in contact and exposed to ultraviolet light. After development, the positive (but reversed) image on the plate could be damped, inked and printed direct onto paper as a correct copy of the original artwork. Lithography could produce a clearer, more detailed result than letterpress and gradually became more widely used.

Offset Lithography – It was found that the thin metal printing plate could be fitted around the roller of a fast-running rotary printing press. A second roller (made of rubber) ran in contact with the plate and transferred (offset) the ink to the paper passing through the press. This new process allowed the plate to carry a correct-reading positive image, simplifying preparation and checking of the pictures and text. It was also found very suitable for larger print runs.

The fourth part of our tour dealt with *Bookbinding* – the example shown was a hardcover book. The volunteer explained the entire process from the machine folding of the large printed sheets (carrying many pages of text), to the assembling in order, stitching and glueing of the latter (known as the inset), and its final assembly into the hard cover. He also explained how the outer covers were blocked (impressed) with the book title in gold or in colour.

The lengthy Norwich double visit was considered to be particularly interesting and successful, and our thanks go to Jenny for organising it and also to the drivers involved.

12 June 2014 – "Members visit to Lound Church"

The visit was very well attended. Our guide, Anne Davis, first took us inside to explain some of the history, and then let us examine the individual features. St John the Baptist is sometimes termed 'The Golden Church' due to the generosity of past rector, Father Booth Lynes (1908–17) who employed no less than Sir Ninian Comper to carry out a lavish interior update just before World War I. Like many others in Norfolk and North Suffolk the church has a round tower; this Norman example was probably rebuilt in the 14th century – the three bells date from 1730. The nave was enlarged in the 13th century, and the chancel about the same time as the tower and south porch (the latter has flushwork panelling). The east window now has fine tracery but the tower and chancel arches are plain; a small lancet in the tower forms the west window. A rare, small squint (unique to Lound and nearby Blundeston) is fitted in the west wall of the nave, north of the tower. Comper obviously gave prior attention to the High Altar, one of four outstanding interior features by him, raising it on new flooring and richly decorating its posts, surmounted by gilded angels supporting pink silk curtains. In the centre of the rear curtain is the figure of Our Lord flanked by the two Johns as He blesses His people. Two outstanding 19th-century side windows by Henry Holiday grace the Chancel.

Inside the porch, a niche above the square-headed arch probably held an image of St John the Baptist; there is a stoup nearby and the 15th-century octagonal bowl font, above which, suspended from a decorated beam is a superbly gilded cover, the second of Comper's interior treasures. The medieval font, of typical East Anglian type, rests on four demi-angels (now decapitated) carrying shields and symbols of the four evangelists.

Comper's Rood Screen depicts the crucifix as a Tree of Glory from which Our Lord reigns as on a throne. It is superbly beautiful and was a favourite of Sir John Betjeman. The Crucified is attended by the Blessed Virgin, and the Beloved Disciple; in turn flanked by six winged cherubim. Beneath the Cross are two dragons, emblems of evil, while at the foot a Pelican in Piety feeds her young with her own blood. The Lamb and Flag, emblems of the Baptist appear below. At the south end of the screen is the Altar of Our Lady with three panels depicting St Mary Salome with her son John the Evangelist, the Virgin and Christ Child, also St Elizabeth with her son John the Baptist.

The last of Comper's treasures is the splendid organ case at the west end, with its gothic and baroque elements. Near the nave north wall and the door to the old rood stair the original Norman font bowl is used as a base for the pulpit.

The visit continued with members taking more time to examine the interior and exterior of the church. Those who had previously booked enjoyed a social meal at the Lound Village Maid to round off a very pleasant evening.

The editor owes a large debt of gratitude to Ron, who took the Newsletter notes while Don has been indisposed.