

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

Volume 43 Number 1 – **NEWSLETTER** – Jan 2015

Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2015

22 Jan 2015 "Lost, perhaps forgotten – Lowestoft's lost chapels" – by local historian Terry Weatherley

12 Feb 2015 "Verdun 1916 – the death of an army" – by military historian Richard Mann

26 Feb 2015 "A Local Thatcher" – related by Nick Walker

The Society's Winter Meal

The meal (three courses plus coffee) will be held as usual at Lowestoft College on Tuesday 10 February 2015 and the cost is £16.50 per head. Please arrive at 7pm, for 7.30pm start.

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 that you all had a happy Christmas and are enjoying a good New Year.

I would draw your attention to the article by Ron Ashman, on page 3, with its interesting insights into the much discussed "Christmas Truce" on the Western Front in December 1914.

Two of the seven lectures between now and May will explore First World War themes.

We will be taking a stand at the Suffolk Local History Council's annual Societies Day at Elmswell on Saturday March 7th. This is an excellent opportunity to hear lectures on Suffolk history and see displays of the research undertaken by local groups in the county. More information will be available next month.

Marilyn Duerden – Chairman

Recent talks and meetings

13 November 2014 – "A Suffolk soldier's story – Clifford Charles Bunn MM" – by Ivan Bunn

Ivan outlined part of his family tree and explained that Clifford was his grandfather's cousin. In response to some local campaigns, during 1914, Clifford volunteered for the Army. Searching for their Service records was extremely difficult, as 60% of British documents had been destroyed by fire during the blitz of WW2. No trace exists of records for Ivan's grandfather and his three brothers (who also volunteered), but Clifford's were found in a category known as the burnt records. When Ivan examined these documents he was surprised to discover that although they were very charred around the edges, sufficient pages remained in a readable condition for him to extract enough information to give a complete picture of Clifford's career through the early campaign.

He was born at Barnby, Suffolk, in 1898, the first son of farm labourer Thomas George Bunn and his wife Ellen. In the 1911 census Clifford was described as butcher's boy and by 4 August 1914, when war was declared, lived

at Syringa Cottage, Elm Tree Farm, Carlton Colville. The Regular Army was then small and attracted many volunteers under the slogan 'Your Country Needs You'. Canon RA Bignold, Rector of Carlton Colville from 1898–1944 had become local Enlisting Officer and his patriotism led him to tirelessly recruit young men including Clifford, then a 17-year-old fisherman, who claimed he was 19 when joining up at St Marks Church Hall on 12 September. On 25 September he was posted to the 3rd Reserve Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment at Felixstowe, and by 26 January 1915 was with the 2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment, at Ypres, Belgium. Diaries state that weather conditions were awful with snow.

In April he moved to the front line near Wytshaete. The troops were subject to sniper fire and on 18 April Clifford was shot in the face, the bullet passed through his jaw, carrying away most of his right ear. He was sent via Wimereaux and clearing stations to the hospital ship St Patrick and returned as a hospital case to England. After recovery, on 19 January 1916, he was posted to Felixstowe for more training and back subsequently to Belgium. On 3 October he was transferred to the 9th Service Battalion, Suffolk Regiment and returned to Ypres as an infantryman. Later, action was to increase near the Somme while the men were stationed near Forward Cottage. After some months they pulled back to Poperinge. On 19-20 December at St Jean, the Battalion suffered a gas attack. Clifford was then aged 18.

In the following April the troops had 10 days Rest and Recovery at Calais, and then in June were attached to the 71st Trench Mortar Brigade. August saw them at Albert, near the Somme, with more fighting to follow at Ginchy. Over one third of their Regiment was lost during the Battle of Morval at the end of September. In November, Clifford suffered from eczema and trench foot and was sent to Boulogne for hospital treatment and rest. January 1917 saw him on duty at Hulloch in the Loos area. In May he was promoted to Acting Corporal. Canon Bignold records that he visited Carlton Colville on leave, in mid-June, but soon returned to the Front as he was gazetted on 18 July for the Military Medal (action unknown) and was also made Full Corporal. After being in action at the Front through September and October he was awarded Grade I proficiency pay – a mark of his quality as a soldier. In November 1917 came the Cambrai action supported by tanks. Huge quantities of men were lost at that time and prisoners captured on both sides. The aftermath was a sea of mud. The Hindenburg support line was reached in December and Christmas spent at Bailleulmont.

In January 1918 there were so many losses that the Suffolks were disbanded, and Clifford transferred to the Norfolk Regiment at the end of February. On 21 March the 9th Battalion German offensive operation began in the trenches near Lagnicourt (over 1 million shells being fired in one day). The Norfolks suffered a terrific bombardment that included gas, and although being good in defence they were eventually all overcome. 364 officers and men were confirmed killed and wounded, over 170 of whom were posted as "missing" – Clifford was amongst the missing. Canon Bignold recorded sadly on 18 April that Clifford's father had received a message that he was probably dead, as Clifford was not the kind of man to surrender. He was not officially notified as dead until 16 May 1919. His name is listed on the Arras Memorial.

27 November 2015 – "Sir James Paget" His Achievements and Legacies" – by Hugh Sturzaker

Hugh Sturzaker, who was consultant surgeon at the James Paget University Hospital until his retirement, has an outstanding knowledge on the history of Great Yarmouth's most famous pioneer surgeon Sir James Paget. Over a period of 23 years Mr Sturzaker played a crucial role in the development of the hospital, and since retiring has studied the famous man's life and legacies. He has recently published a book on the subject, following his earlier history of the first 25 years of the hospital that carries the James Paget name.

Great Yarmouth was a quite prosperous Georgian town when James Paget was born in 1814, twelfth of seventeen children, to parents Samuel (a successful businessman) and Sarah, living in a mansion on the south quay. However the good life James enjoyed was to last a mere 10 years as his father's businesses began to fail. Unlike his brothers, who were sent for further education in London, at age 13 James had to stay on at the nearby local school, as did his younger brothers. James decided to join the Navy at 15, but at the last moment his father destroyed his application letter and steered him towards a career in the medical profession. He was apprenticed for five years in the sum of 100 guineas to their family doctor, Charles Costerton, who trained as a surgeon at St Bartholomew's in London. James worked hard, seeing some poorer patients, taking messages, making up prescriptions and keeping records. He read a great deal and dissected some amputated limbs in training, later taking anatomy lessons from Mr Randall, a surgeon at Acle, and had the opportunity to witness a number of

operations. James's beautifully written notes from his lessons are now preserved at the Royal College of Surgeons.

James and his elder brother Charles, aided by their mother's coaching in orderly arrangement, studied and collected local flora and fauna, publishing their results in 1834 as 'A Sketch of the Natural History of Yarmouth'. James took painting lessons from Norfolk's John Crome and learnt enough to illustrate his lectures – some of his drawings were displayed in St Bartholomew's museum. His brothers Charles and Alfred were very accomplished artists.

In October 1834 James went to study medicine at St Bartholomew's, helped by his brother George who had friends and some influence there, and lent him the £100 entrance fee, plus putting him up for three months. Not impressed by the lectures, James spent his time reading (helped by his knowledge of French and German) and many hours dissecting cadavers. His efforts brought him first place in the medical school examinations for medicine, surgery, chemistry and botany at the year's end. His achievements while studying anatomy in 1835 included the discovery of *Trichina spiralis*, a tiny encysted parasitic worm lodged in human muscle. In May 1836 he passed the College of Surgeons' membership examination and met Sir Astley Cooper, President of the Royal College of Surgeons, who spent his youth in Great Yarmouth. Although much different in character they became leading surgeons of their day.

As a qualified doctor, James still struggled with lack of finance due to his father's near bankruptcy. He became engaged to Lydia North but it would be eight years before they married – James meanwhile earning money by teaching students and writing articles for leading medical journals, many of which required translation. In 1837 he became Curator of Bart's museum, organising specimens and preparing lectures, and learning all the time. By 1839 he was appointed Demonstrator of Morbid Anatomy doing post mortems plus many lectures at the request of the students, and in 1842 was good enough to be asked to catalogue the museum of the RCS. His reputation grew and the following year he was appointed Bart's Lecturer in Physiology when this subject was split from Anatomy. Sadly his mother died at this point. This was an intensely busy time for him and his lectures formed much of the Handbook of Physiology (published later, in 1848, by Kirkes, one of his brightest students). The improvement of the College where he also acted as Warden, and Paget's outstanding hard work, caused him to become known as the father of Pathology – he was also made a Foundation Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1843.

In 1844 James and Lydia married, but he still made time for teaching and even started a charity for the poor and homeless. In 1847 he was made Professor of Anatomy & Surgery at the RCS, a great honour. The holder was required to give six lectures over two weeks. He chose General Pathology as his topic and was so successful that he was re-elected for the next five years. 1847 also saw the first anaesthetic trials at Edinburgh University, and over the following three years it was widely adopted at St Bartholomew's. In 1851 James was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and he decided to resign from his post as College Warden of Bart's and take on more private practice. His life was still not easy with a growing family to support besides helping his brothers George and Alfred pay off their father's debts. He received several other senior appointments in this decade. His father died in 1858 and shortly after the family moved to Harewood Place, Hanover Square, then James was appointed Surgeon Extraordinary to Queen Victoria. Around this time he suffered on-and-off with bouts of pneumonia but recovered on each occasion.

In the 1860s James received more honours and senior surgical appointments (in 1861 he was made Surgeon of St Bartholomew's) while continuing his surgical classes and lectures. The brothers finally cleared the last of their father's debts in 1862. James and his family enjoyed their first holiday together in 1868, though he made sure the children also included some elements of study and reading. He published an educational report 'What becomes of Medical Students?' in 1869. In the 1870s and '80s he continued his outstanding life's work (Queen Victoria made him a baronet in 1871); he was a renowned public speaker, wrote more than 200 books and scientific papers and described ten previously unrecognised medical conditions. In September 1888 James opened the Great Yarmouth General Hospital that was to survive virtually unchanged in exterior appearance for 90 years. A religious, quiet and humble man, James Paget always showed great compassion for his family, his friends and his students. In his final years he moved to live in Regent's Park, London, but still visited Great Yarmouth. His wife died in 1895, and that year St Bartholomew's named a ward in his honour. In 1897 the Royal College of Surgeons awarded him the Honorary Gold Medal of the College. James Paget died peacefully at home in 1899 and his funeral was held in Westminster Abbey.

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Christmas Day in the Trenches by Ron Ashman

Recently we have read a lot about the Christmas Day Truce that took place in 1914 between the German and Allied forces, however, it should be remembered that while the truce was implemented in a number of areas, it did not cover the whole of the front line.

In some areas the shelling and firing continued and there were deaths on that day. One soldier wrote to his parents in Easton, near Winchester; "Perhaps you read of the conversation on Christmas Day between us and the Germans. It's all lies. The sniping went on just the same; in fact, our captain was wounded, so don't believe what you see in the papers." (*Hampshire Chronicle, January 1915*).

Some of the troops were opposed to any temporary cessation of hostilities. The commander of one [British Regiment](#) issued orders forbidding friendly communication with the opposing German troops. Not all of the Germans were in agreement with it either, as one young corporal, a certain [Adolf Hitler](#), opposed any truce.

Leading up to Christmas that year, there had been several peace initiatives. The Pope had asked '...for the guns to be silent at least upon the night the angels sing'. But all attempts for peace were officially rebuffed.

The Lowestoft Journal reported that "According to the King of Bavaria, the terms of peace will have to include a guarantee that the German Christmas shall not again be disturbed".

In a letter to his home, one Leicestershire soldier wrote that directly in front of his regiment there were two German regiments. On the left was a Saxon regiment and on the right was a Prussian regiment. Having agreed a truce, the British soldiers went to meet the Germans, whereupon the Prussian soldiers open fire, killing two and wounding many more. The Saxons then threatened the Prussians and the truce was maintained.

Coverage of the war in the Lowestoft Journal of 2 January 1915 revealed the following report under the headline: 'Christmas Day in the trenches'.

"The early hours of Christmas morning, says a Times despatch, were celebrated with a whole hearted enthusiasm which seemed to receive an added impetus from sporadic German shell and rifle fire. On Xmas Eve Christmas carols were sung in the British trenches. 'Tipperary' was for once in a way ignored. In one instance at least British and German soldiers sang a hymn together – in tune and sentiment if not in actual words. But no sooner had the carol ended than the typical cynical Teutonic touch was introduced by a shower of bullets from the enemy trenches."

In another article they mentioned the things being sent to the troops:-

"Friends and charitable organisations combined to make the soldiers Christmas in Northern France and Flanders as happy as it could be under fire. Plum puddings went out in their tens of thousands, pipes, tobacco, cigars and cigarettes poured in in almost staggering quantities. The Christmas puddings and other delicacies found their way into the foremost trenches in many cases. The King and Queen sent Christmas cards." Note that it stated 'many' and not most, so one wonders how many on the front line did actually receive a Christmas pudding or any other item.

The following week, 9 January 1915, the Lowestoft Journal carried a report that the German army had issued an order against fraternisation. It stated that any further incidents would be punished as Treason.

In the same Newspaper there was a letter printed from 'The Three Corporals' in which they first thanked their friends for the Christmas puddings. Then went on: "It is now 8 weeks since we left Old England and we have spent some exciting times in the trenches."

They also added that they had some mistletoe but no girls, so they had to kiss the sergeant. When resting they wanted to play football but "...we have not seen a football since leaving England. We thank you in anticipation". It is not known if they did get their football.

Were these 'exciting times in the trenches' to stop their relatives and friends back home from worrying or even to help with the recruitment drive?. Also, did they really kiss the sergeant, or was this just a joke and a message to their loved ones back home to say they were not fraternising with the local ladies

Hopton Ruined Church Project

We have been contacted by Rachel Harrison, the project co-ordinator for the Hopton Ruined Church Project, which is a two year project being led by Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust. Primarily the project is to consolidate the ruin into a safe state of repair to be re-opened for the village community to stage events and enjoy the landscape.

The project will be launched at Hopton Village Hall on February 10th from 10am until 2pm, which is an open event to everybody, and will host a series of displays and information to go and see, but they would also like to invite any contributions of old photographs, postcards, stories, recollections and mementos which they can scan and record on the day. Refreshments will also be available.

From this event it is hoped a Hopton-on-sea Local History Group could be formed to undertake further research and to collect the information into a booklet/ leaflet/ website which could conclude with a final exhibition later in the year to share the findings from the research project.

They hope it will be a great community event which will encourage locals or past residents to go along and get involved in looking at Hopton-on-sea past.

Although now seen as a modern village Hopton-on-sea has a rich historical past from neolithic discoveries through to its old and new churches, war time training camps, the railway, a lost neighbouring village of Newton and the development of the holiday camps, there is much more to Hopton-on-sea than first meets the eye!

If you are unable to attend on the day but would like to get involved in the Village History Group or have any information on the village you would wish to share please get in touch with Rachel.

Please see the poster on the Secretary's table for further details or contact Rachel as below.

Rachel Harrison 07785750129 or email her at: rachelh4291@yahoo.co.uk

Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust :- www.greatyarmouthpreservationtrust.org Tel. 01493 846195

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