

Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

Volume 43 Number 3 – **NEWSLETTER** – Mar 2015

Society website: www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk

What's On in 2015

12 Mar 2015 "Recent archaeological digs including Barbers Point near Aldeburgh" – by Jezz Meredith

26 Mar 2015 " The History of Pakefield Lighthouse and National Coastwatch" – Di & Phil Humphrey

Please Note:- This is a change in our advertised programme, the "Amazing Tale of Ali Pasha" by Don Friston will now be on 24th September 2015.

23 Apr 2015 "The Mappa Mundi" – by Ron Ashman

&

"The Lost Villages of Norfolk" – by Richard Mundy

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

On Saturday March 7th, Ron and Irene Ashman, Janis Kirby and Rodney Duerden attended the annual Societies Day arranged by the Suffolk Local History Council at Elmswell near Bury St. Edmunds. A display showing the distribution of pottery finds collected at Covehithe in January on the two day investigation formed part of our contribution to the meeting. The other half of our display were items relating to the Bloodmoor Hill excavations which will be an important part of the 2015 season at Broad House. It included a slideshow of the exhibits which will be in the new cases at the museum and photographs of the "Warrior" figure which will be on loan from the British Museum from July 1st.

There were some very interesting displays and talks, several of which gave ideas for future projects relevant to our own Society.

Marilyn Duerden – Chairman

Recent talks and meetings

12 February 2015 – "Verdun 1916 – the death of an army" – by Richard Mann

To many members of the Society, Verdun will be familiar, but only as a famous name. After Richard Mann's detailed talk we are as well informed about it as any of the battles of WWI in which British forces were involved.

He started by stating that the German plan was "to kill as many French as they can", one which had been in the mind of von Schlieffen as early as 1890 and formalised in 1905. This would involve a rapid 6 week demolition of France's forces while keeping her ally Russia, who was not expected to be well-organised, in check on the Eastern Front, rapidly transporting troops by Germany's extensive railway network. The plan also depended on a rapid 5 pronged advance through Belgium hoping that Britain would not join the war. In 1914, the plan almost succeeded but was brought to a halt at the Battle of the Marne. Thereafter a "defensive" war commenced for which the Germans were well prepared as they had already developed a trench system with barbed wire fences, machine guns, pill boxes, gas shells, flame throwers and bomb-proof shelters. The French also had a plan for dealing with Germany, Plan XVII. This included a direct frontal attack in the difficult, hill country of Alsace-Lorraine, relying on the Russian alliance and Belgium's neutrality in the west. They relished "L'offensive a outrance" (attack to excess) and "élan vital" (energy and enthusiasm) rather than safety in defence, looking back to successes of the Grand Army of 1792, at a very different time and against a differently armed enemy.

Richard illustrated his talk with a series of detailed maps, the first of which showed the von Schlieffen Plan, with proposed attacks and the actual ones, and the subsequent Battle of the Marne. In addition, he was able to show in portraits the main soldiers on each side, who in a bewildering array of promotions, demotions, successes and failures, orchestrated the bloody slaughter; Joffre, Petain and Nivelle versus von Moltke, von Falkenhayn, Ludendorff and Hindenburg.

The town of Verdun lay at the point where an important east-west route between France and Germany (Paris to Metz), crossed the River Meuse, whose defence was crucial to the safety of NE France. The map of Verdun which Richard showed us, revealed that the defences consisted of a number of forts and casements on hill tops on both sides of the Meuse, incorporating similar ideas to those which created the Maginot Line before WWII and with similar results.

When the war started in August 1914, German guns such as "Big Berthas" and 16.5" howitzers managed to destroy the Belgian forts in 2 days. The French saw this as a reason not to reinforce the defences at Verdun but when the attack there, scheduled for the night of February 11/12th 1916 was held up by bad weather for 10 days, the French managed to send 2 divisions and improve the forts. However, the German barrage (from 1220 pieces of artillery, including 542 heavy guns), commencing at 4.00 am on February 21st was the heaviest in history and by the 25th the crucial fort at Douaumont had suffered the same fate as those in Belgium. Richard showed not only maps of the fort but also aerial photographs before and after the bombardment and photographs of the damage. The Germans built railway lines on which to transport heavy weapons including naval guns and having captured Douaumont, proceeded to shell other forts around Verdun. 80,000 shells landed on the Bois de Courtes. A photograph of 1919 showed the shell holes and some recovery of the trees. Owing to the shape of the Verdun salient, the Germans could not advance on Verdun without first taking other forts on the crescent shaped front line.

In the west, Bois de Bourrus, Cote 304 and Le Mort Homme were also subjected to terrible bombardments but reinforced French artillery on the Meuse's left bank prevented the German troops from taking advantage of their destruction. By the end of March 89,000 French and 81,000 German troops were lost and another stalemate was reached.

Richard then showed more personal photographs of life in the forts before, during and after the battle and a rather comic set of incidents relating to exactly which German soldier had entered Douaumont first. Eventually it was an officer, Captain von Brandis who was given the credit rather than a Lieutenant Kruze or a lowly Sergeant Radhe. When a new attack began at the beginning of May the momentum was lost when an explosion inside Douaumont killed 697 and wounded 1800 Germans. So great was this destruction both to men and the fort that the Germans sealed their bodies in an arched tunnel which became a war grave, visited annually by friend and foe alike. This setback enabled the French to hold on to their existing territory and by keeping open the east-west route through Verdun, known as "Le Voie Sacree", they were able to re-supply the forts successfully. One photograph showed a steady stream of traffic along the road, supplies of food and ammunition travelling towards Verdun and ambulances with the wounded, away from it. In addition, by maintaining a rotation of troops on a regular basis (259 out of 330 regiments fought there), the French were able to hold out against the Germans.

"Ils ne passeront pas", (Petain to Joffre) became the watchword.

Mort Homme was taken on May 29th and Fort Vaux, by then an absolute ruin, on June 7th but they in turn were re-captured by the French, the latter on November 2nd. It was to help relieve the summer German offensive that the British were asked to bring forward their plans for an attack in the west from August to July 1st in what became known as the Battle of the Somme with the same massive slaughter for little gain as experienced at Verdun.

At the end of the longest battle of the war, there were 162,000 French dead or missing and 216,000 wounded; the Germans lost almost as many 142,000 killed or missing and 187,000 wounded. 22 million shells were fired, including some which contained phosgene. The town of Verdun itself had to be rebuilt but it was not captured and for the French this was a Pyrrhic victory and for the Germans a setback to their original plans.

Richard then followed the career of some of the main protagonists. Petain became leader of Vichy France in 1940 and was tried as a war criminal in 1945 and von Hindenberg was president of Germany from 1925 under whom Hitler was allowed to rise to absolute leader as Chancellor and Fuhrer.

26 February 2015 – "A Local Thatcher" – by Nick Walker

Nick started his talk by saying the role of the thatcher was traditionally passed down the male line of the family. However, in his case none of his family had ever been employed in this trade. He preferred to call it a trade rather than a craft. He chose this career as he liked working outside and considered it to be constructive hands-on work. As there are no training courses on the subject and it is not something that can be learned from a book, he approached the thatchers within a 60 mile radius. Eventually one took him on and after 7 years of learning the trade, he branched out on his own. His first job was on the buildings in the Boulevard in Oulton Broad.

Thatch is considered to be the first form of roofing. It is used all over the world and involves the use of many different materials, such as straw, reed, heather, and in foreign countries, banana leaves.

These are all natural materials and would be readily available locally. In this area there is a lot of water reed but the use of this is rare outside East Anglia, with straw being used in other areas. Heather is used in more remote places. Homes were not the only structures to be thatched as corn and hay stacks were also protected from the weather in this way. The use of thatched roofs declined in the mid to late 1800's as first canals then the railways made materials such as slate and tiles more readily available. Tiled roofs last longer than thatched ones. There is always

the risk, and fear, of fire with thatched buildings, many of which have been linked to wood burners and faulty chimneys.

Most of the reed used comes from areas owned by wildlife trusts. This can be up to 8 feet in length, depending on the source. The key to keeping the roof watertight is that the pitch of the roof should be about 55 degrees. This ensures that the water cannot penetrate the reed and the water runs off the roof preventing it from becoming waterlogged. With a reed roof the ridge has to be completed with wheat straw as reed breaks when bent. Some thatchers decorate their roofs with straw animals, a practice that Nick does not follow.

A roof thatched with reed should last about 80 years although the ridge will have to be replaced before that time. A straw thatched roof should last about 50 years.

The material for straw thatching is not as readily available as it used to be, modern grain crops having a shorter stalk. The seed heads (ears) of these varieties are much larger and heavier and a long stalk would bend with the weight. As a result this necessitates the growing of 'old' varieties of wheat such as Squarehead Master which can grow up to 4 feet tall and makes it a good crop for a roof covering. As these crops are not commercially grown the thatcher either has to grow his own or find a farmer to grow the crop for him. To thatch a small

cottage with 4 foot wheat straw would need 2 to 3 acres to be planted. Straw also requires more handling than reed. With reed it is cut, bundled and the ends trimmed and it is ready for use. With straw it has to be cut with a 'binder', as a combine harvester would damage the long stalks. Then it has to be stood in 'shocks or stooks', those tent like features were a common sight in fields up to the late 60's. Having stood thus for about 2 weeks it is stacked and then threshed in a 'drum' (threshing machine). When used the straw is laid out in a pile and 'wetted down' before being drawn out into useable bundles.

To re-thatch a roof the old material is stripped down to what is known as the base coat, that could be up to 600 years old. If the bottom of this base coat is black it could mean that the building dates back to before it had a chimney.

Wire netting is fitted over the roof to prevent squirrels, rats and birds from getting into the thatch.

Nick brought with him some of his tools, some broaches and a bundle of reed and a bundle of wheat straw.

The broaches were split hazel rods about 30 inches long and sharpened to a point at each end. In other counties these have different names, in Cambridgeshire they are known as a 'Spit'. Nick deftly twisted each rod in the middle to form a 'hairpin' shape which is pushed into the thatch to hold it in place.

The tools included:

Leggett: used to hammer on the butts of the reed, dressing it into position.

Dutchman: smaller version of a Leggett.

Liggers: horizontal rods of split hazel (4' to 5' long) used on the outside surface of ridges, held down by broaches, and in the case of long straw, on eaves and gables.

Sheepshears: used for trimming thatch, (garden shears could be used as an alternative).

Mallet: for fitting broaches, has a beech head and an ash handle.

Rake: for removing unwanted material from the face of long straw, also used to compact the roof.

Pitch Fork: for moving the straw.

Knife: general purpose thatch cutting tool used mainly for cutting the eaves and gable on straw roof's, also used for cutting the string on bundles. Nick had found this one in the thatch in a building erected in the 1930's. Nick thought it could have been left by a thatcher on his last job before retiring.

Billhooks: for cutting coppiced hazel.

Long Knife: this knife has a long blade and a long handle and is used for trimming the thatch on the roof. Nick gave a demonstration, with his whetstone, on how to put a serrated edge on the blade which is then used like a saw to cut the thatch.

Nick had acquired his tools from a variety of sources. He favoured old tools as he considered the steel in these to be of a higher quality than modern steel.

The Grave of the German soldier. by Ron Ashman

In the church yard near the north door of Pakefield church is the grave of a German soldier. This is the last resting place of Lieutenant Leopold Schultze who served in the 1st Hussars, King's German Legion. His last campaign was at the battle of Waterloo when he fought at the farmhouse of La Haye Sainte.

Leopold Sigismund Schultze served as an N.C.O before receiving his commission on 17 September 1810, becoming Lieutenant on 19 November 1811. He had served in the expedition to the Baltic in 1807; in the Peninsula from 1809 to 1813; the campaign in the South of France 1813 to 1814; in the Netherlands in 1814 and at the battle of Waterloo. He was decorated for his service in the Peninsula and at Waterloo. In 1816 he was placed on half pay.

I would like to thank Jerry Lacey for sending the above information to me.

So why is a German officer buried in Pakefield?. Searching on Find My Past revealed that Leopold had been born in Hanover in 1782. He married a lady called Mary Anne Rous on 7 May 1817 in Ufford, Suffolk, where the groom's parish is listed as the German Legion. Mary Anne was born in South Walsham, Norfolk, in 1794. She had a sister called Happy who was baptised in Beccles in 1805, with the surname Rouse.

The only Census that lists Leopold, and Mary Anne, is the one for 1851, when they are recorded as living in the High Street in Southwold. Unfortunately it does not record the house number, but his occupation is given as Lieutenant Hussars Queen's German Legion. Leopold is living with his wife, his sister-in-law (now Happy Button), and a German lodger who is a Professor of Foreign Languages and Music. From passenger lists of ships arriving in England, a Leopold Schultze, Lieutenant late of the German Legion, and a lady, arrived at the Port of London on 9 March 1846. Which is probably why they were not recorded in the earlier Census.

I have not been able to find out when he moved to Pakefield, nor where he lived, but Leopold died in 1857 at the age of 75 and was buried on 5 August of that year in All Saints & St Margaret churchyard. After Leopold's death Mary Anne appears to have moved to Woodbridge to live with Jacob Button, a brickmaker, and his wife, where she is listed as an aunt. Mary Anne died in 1884 and is buried in Woodbridge cemetery.

At the battle of Waterloo the Allied Army under the Duke of Wellington was a coalition of British, Dutch, Belgian and German soldiers. The French army, under Napoleon Bonaparte, had around 69,000 soldiers which consisted of 48,000 infantry, 14,000 cavalry, and 7,000 artillery with 250 guns.

Wellington's troops consisted of 67,000 men: 50,000 infantry, 11,000 cavalry, and 6,000 artillery with 150 guns. Of these, 25,000 were British, with another 6,000 from the [King's German Legion](#). All of the [British Army](#) troops were regular soldiers with 7,000 of them being [Peninsular War](#) veterans, which included Leopold.

At one end of the Allied Army battle line was the château, garden and orchard of [Hougoumont](#), which was a large and well-built country house. At the other end was the hamlet of Papelotte. Both Hougoumont and Papelotte were fortified and garrisoned, and thus anchored Wellington's flanks securely. About in the middle and in front of the rest of Wellington's line, was the farmhouse and orchard of [La Haye Sainte](#), which was garrisoned with 400 light infantry of the [King's German Legion](#).

During the battle the French repeatedly attacked La Haye Sainte and eventually they were successful, partly because the King's German Legion's ammunition ran out. But these brave soldiers had held the centre of the battlefield for almost the entire day, which had stalled the French advance.

If anyone has any further information on Leopold Schultz, if you could let me know, it would be appreciated.

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