

# Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society

Volume 43 Number 6 – **NEWSLETTER** – Sept 2015

Society website: [www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk](http://www.lowestoftlocalhistory.co.uk)

## What's On in 2015

10 Sept 2015 "A Suffolk Village in Wartime" – by Sheila Wright

24 Sept 2015 "The Amazing Tale of Ali Pasha" – by Don Friston

8 Oct 2015 "100 years of St John's Ambulance in Lowestoft" – by Tony Curd

22 Oct 2015 "Far Eastern Pavilions – part 2" – by Michael Mills

**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**

Welcome to the Autumn series of meetings. We have a varied programme of talks that I hope you will enjoy.

Following a kind invitation from the curator, Jan Holloway, we have arranged a morning visit to Southwold Museum, on Tuesday October 6th. The address of the Museum is 9-11 Victoria Street, IP18 6HZ. If you are interested in this event, please sign the list. We will meet at the Museum at 10.30 am. If you will require a lift or can offer one, indicate on the form. We are looking into the possibility of combining this outing with a visit to the Southwold Sailors' Reading Room.

*Marilyn Duerden* – Chairman

## **Recent talks and meetings**

**14 May 2015 – "A Kirkley Slide show" – by Chris Brooks**

Chris started his slide show by inviting questions and comments during the presentation. The slides covered the period from about 1850 up to the present day and were not in any chronological or geographical order.

The first slides showed Morton Peto's South Lowestoft development, looking inland from the old south pier towards the Royal Hotel and the big houses that stood facing the sea along the Marine Esplanade. Only a few houses at the south end of this row now remain. The Royal Hotel was shown both before and after an upper storey was added. The south pier was at that time an all-wooden structure with a parapet on the seaward side, but had no railings to the harbour side. The pier was popular with the upper classes that liked to promenade along it. Later a screen was installed along its seaward side that allowed visitors some protection from the wind.

The main part of the village of Kirkley in the mid-nineteenth century was concentrated at the southern boundary of the parish, along Pakefield Street. In Colville Road (now Clifton Road) stood the mission church of St Matthews, with its ornate interior and large organ. St Peter's church, further south, having fallen into disrepair had been re-built in 1749. Chris's picture from about 1859, showed this church standing in open fields. Near it there also once stood an ornate brick-built water tower. The rectory, which now stands near the church, was

built in 1892. Known today as the church of St Peter and St John, the parishes combined after the demolition in 1977 of St John's church that had stood at the junction of London Road South and Belvedere Road.

Slides of the inside of the St Aubyn's College schoolroom and dining room, situated on the corner of College Road and Carlton Road, showed that the interior was not as well funded as the exterior of the building. In 1905 the college closed. The college playing field had once been on open land and its former boundary is marked by three roads; John Street, Bruce Street and Payne Street – all named after the headmaster John Bruce Payne.

The Claremont Pier was constructed in 1902/3 to allow passengers to disembark from the Belle paddle steamers operated by the Coastal Development Company. These vessels travelled north from the Thames up the East Coast to Great Yarmouth, stopping at various resorts along the way. Before the Claremont was completed the passengers were ferried to the beach by small boats. The Pier today is much shorter than the original as the 'T' section at the seaward end was demolished many years ago. During the Second World War a section was removed to prevent the pier being used by the enemy in the possibility of an invasion. Both Lowestoft piers were favourite spots with local rod and line fishermen, and in 1928 a 26lb cod was caught from the Claremont.

Coastal erosion is nothing new. Today the esplanade is being repaired again, but in 1905 heavy seas caused the sea wall, built in 1850, near the Hatfield Hotel to collapse. Slides of the beach area known as Children's Corner revealed how it has changed over the years. Some showed the sea right up to the sea wall as it is today, whilst others showed a large area of beach. Many in the audience had fond memories of the Punch and Judy show that was performed before children sitting on the sand.

In the late 19th century bathing machines were very popular in the area between the piers. These machines were first used in Margate in Kent. The purpose of the wooden carts was to uphold the rules of bathing etiquette of the 18th and 19th centuries. They would be rolled into the sea, complete with bather; when the bather had finished swimming, the cart would be hauled back onto the sand by a windlass sited at the top of the beach. In some parts of the country the cart would be moved in and out of the sea by horse or human power. Another popular seaside activity in the Edwardian period was to promenade along the Esplanade. For the children there were donkey rides. During the Second World War, scaffolding, barbed wire and beach mines all formed part of the beach defences and the public was excluded for safety.

Chris showed a large number of slides of private and commercial buildings in Kirkley, including the Empire Hotel, the largest hotel in Lowestoft, which is said to have had a room for every day of the year.

During the time of the First World War the 1916 offshore bombardment by the German Navy and the Zeppelin raid that preceded it damaged many premises in Kirkley.

## **28 May 2015 – "The Society's Annual General Meeting"**

Our President Malcolm Berridge, who was unable to attend the A.G.M, sent a message conveying his thanks and appreciation to all those who helped to run the Society and everyone who is involved with the Museum.

The Society Treasurer's Report showed our expenses to be similar next year and if our income is the same it should be more than enough to cover these expenses. So therefore the Committee recommended the membership should remain at £15. This was approved by the members at the meeting.

The committee now consists of:-

Marilyn Duerden Chairman

Rodney Duerden Vice-chairman

Irene Ashman Secretary

Ray Collins Treasurer

Richard Mundy Programme Secretary

Don Friston Committee member/Newsletter Editor

Janis Kirby Committee member

Jenny Hatton Committee member

Ron Ashman Committee member

At present we are one committee member short, this position is open to any member who would like to join. We have four committee meetings a year lasting one to one-and-a-half hours, meeting at the Secretary's home.

Thanks were recorded to Terry Weatherley for maintaining our web-site in 2015 and keeping it up to date.

### **23 June 2015 – "Society visit to St Nicholas Parish Church, Great Yarmouth"**

On Tuesday 23 June, 16 members and friends visited the Church of St Nicholas in Great Yarmouth. Our guide for the evening tour of the church and graveyard was Paul Davies, the chairman of Great Yarmouth Local History and Archaeological Society.

In the graveyard two headstones mentioned were the one to a victim of the 1845 bridge collapse and another of David Bartleman, a mariner who fought off a pirate cutter. The latter headstone reads:

To The Memory of

DAVID BARTLEMAN

Master of the Brig Alexander & Margaret

*of North Shields*

Who on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan<sup>ry</sup> 1781, on the Norfolk Coast

With only three 3 pounders and ten Men and Boys

*Nobly defended himself*

Against a Cutter carrying eighteen 4 pounders

And upwards of a Hundred Men

Commanded by the notorious English Pirate

*FALL*

And fairly beat him off

Two hours after the Enemy came down upon him again

When totally disabled his Mate Daniel MacAuley

Expiring with the loss of blood

And himself dangerously wounded

He was obliged to strike and ransom

He brought his battered Vessel into *Yarmouth*

With more

Than the Honours of a Conqueror

And died here in consequence of his wounds

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February following

In the 25<sup>th</sup> Year of his Age

The church of St. Nicholas, was founded in 1101 by Herbert de Losinga, the Bishop of Norwich, and consecrated in 1119, as a penance for an act of simony, the buying or selling of ecclesiastical privileges. It is said to be the largest parish church in the country.

The Bishop associated the church of St. Nicholas with a small priory of Benedictine monks, which he made a cell of the cathedral priory at Norwich. The only building remaining from this priory is the refectory, which after the reformation was used as a gunpowder store, then a stable and later became the Priory School. The building is now called the Priory Centre and contains a café, support centre and information point.

In the medieval period Great Yarmouth was the fourth richest town in England. The church had stained glass, painted walls, relics of saints and tapestries. Over the years there have been many changes to the 236ft (72m) long building. An unusual feature is that the nave, at 26ft (7.9m) wide, is narrower than both of the north and south aisles.

In 1649, during the Commonwealth period, the church was divided into three parts. The Puritans used the chancel, the Presbyterians used the north aisle and the Anglican Church used the south aisle. The arches were bricked up with a two feet thick wall and other walls were built to complete the segregation. All three denominations held their services at the same time. These brick walls remained in place until 1847.

In 1942 disaster struck when the church was badly damaged during a German air raid, leaving only the Norman tower and the walls standing. The church interior and roof were re-built with the aid of a War Damage grant and funding from local people and businesses. Twelve new bells were installed in the tower. In 1961 it was re-consecrated by the Bishop of Norwich then in 2012 it was designated as a Minster.

The church has many fine stained glass windows, the largest being that in the east window which depicts the life of Christ from the Annunciation to the Ascension.

On 13 October 2014 a memorial stone was unveiled to commemorate the [1981 crash of the Westland Wessex helicopter belonging to Bristow Helicopters](#), which resulted in the deaths of thirteen people.

Following this visit to St Nicholas church, members enjoyed a meal at the Foxburrow in Gunton.

## **13 August 2015 – "Touching the Tide"**

Rodney Duerden attended a presentation at Dunwich reading room by one of the team who directed the fieldwalking event at Covehithe in January. It was a detailed explanation of how to organise a similar event, from obtaining landowner consent right through to indentifying finds and publishing their distribution on maps. As a follow up to that, Aldeburgh & District L.H.S. are organising a field walk at Chapel Barn Farm near Aldeburgh on Thursday September 24th to which Rodney Duerden and Paul Durbidge will go.

'Touching the Tide' have produced two interesting booklets, "Life and Death at Barber's Point" and "2 million years on the Suffolk coast" which are available for purchase at £2 each.

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