

Society News

The Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society
Newsletter

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Editors:- Ron and Irene Ashman



Benjamin Britten Statue.

by Ron Ashman

In the October 2022 Newsletter our President, Elizabeth Talbot, wrote an article about the proposed life size bronze statue of the composer Benjamin Britten. In this Elizabeth outlined the object of the project and the details of a recently-launched Britten As A Boy Statue Committee. The plan was to erect the statue on the Lowestoft seafront, opposite his childhood home, to inspire local children to achieve their ambitions.



The Committee raised the £120,000 needed to fund the creation of the statue, for which they should be congratulated, with the work being completed by the royal sculptor Ian Rank-Broadley.

On 10 November the statue of Benjamin Britten was unveiled in the Lord Kitchener's Garden on Kirkley Cliff. The statue stands 12 feet tall and shows him as a boy looking out to sea. It is said that the sea inspired much of his music.

The position of the statue is near to the house in which he was born, being on the other side of the road behind him, and to its left on what now is a car park stood South Lodge one of his early schools.



South Lodge



The Plaque

War Memorials.

by Ron Ashman

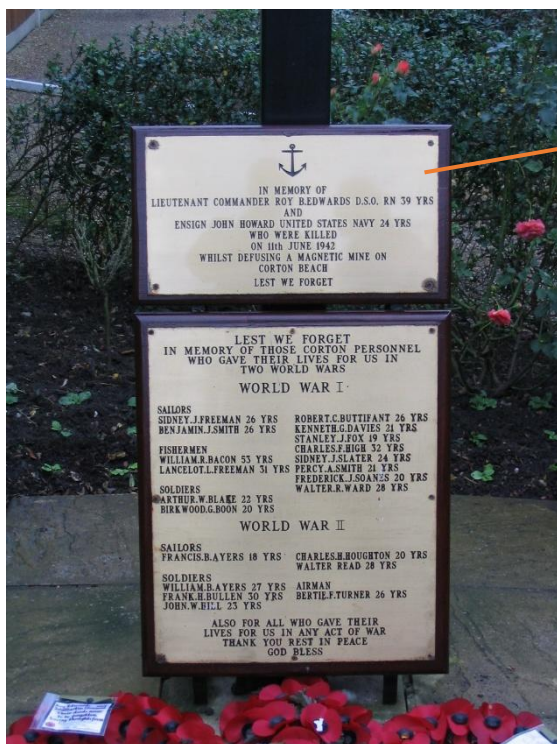
In November last year a memorial was unveiled in Lowestoft to the brave soldiers of the Bomb Disposal Unit who died whilst defusing bombs dropped in this area.

There is, however, a memorial to two Navy personnel, one British and one American, in the village of Corton. The two officers were Lt Commander Edwards of the Royal Navy Rendering Mines Safe Command, HMS Watchful, based in Great Yarmouth, and John Howard, an American Navy Ensign who had transferred to Naval Ordnance in 1942, who was to assist Lt Cmdr Edwards. Ensign John Howard, had the unfortunate title of being the first American from the US Navy to lose his life in World War II, and had a US Navy ship named after him

A local memorial plaque, dating from 1946, was moved from the redundant Gt Yarmouth St James's Church, which had been declared redundant in 1999, to St Nicholas Church Minister in Great Yarmouth and re-dedicated on 9 June, 2002, on the same day that a brand new memorial was unveiled at Corton Village. Members of Commander Edward's family, plus representatives from the United States and Royal Navy's, the British Legion, the Wrens and the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserves attended both ceremonies.

On 11 June 1942 Bill Ayers, an auxiliary coastguard, reported a mine in the breakers north of Tibbenham's Score at Corton to Lt Com Edwards. It was identified as a submarine laid, T-type magnetic mine, over seven feet long and containing a 507lb explosive charge. Two had already been defused elsewhere and Edwards asked permission to attempt to disarm the Corton one.

Knowing that this type of mine was very dangerous, and reputed to be booby-trapped, his superiors at the Department of Torpedoes and Mine Investigation Section said they would arrange for a specialist from HMS Vernon to do the job. Later that day Edwards repeated his request and, because of local conditions, maybe he thought with the rising tide it could have been swept from the beach becoming a bigger threat out at sea, permission was reluctantly given.



In late afternoon they examined the mine but withdrew smartly when a strange noise came from it. After half an hour they returned, leaving Cmdr Theobald, a colleague from Great Yarmouth, on the cliff-top recording their progress. Edwards removed the cover plate while the young Ensign John Howard watched and then began work on the smaller plate beneath. After removing the securing nuts Edwards was seen trying to force it free using a piece of driftwood. Soon after, a tremendous explosion signalled the virtual obliteration of two very brave men – the time was

6.02 pm. The Navy later discovered that the arming clock lay beneath this plate and had been booby-trapped. The force of the explosion was so great that sand landed on a train at Corton Railway Station, a considerable

distance away, and nearby, Cliff Cottages were damaged. Later, the remains of both men were buried at sea.

Lt Commander Edwards, who had successfully dealt with over 180 mines in two years, was awarded the DSO and, later, a commendation for 'coolness and devotion to duty'.

Below are photographs taken a few years ago of the Chapel, the Plaque and two Kneelers dedicated to the two Navy personnel in St Nicholas Church Minister.



Important Change to Talks Programme.

by Ron Ashman

Please note that the title of the talk by Ivan Bunn on 12 February has been changed to **“Lowestoft’s Crimean War Connections”**.

Apathy Rules, OK?

by Ron Ashman

On 20 November 2025 a public referendum was held on the East Suffolk Council Neighbourhood Plan. The plan was prepared by Lowestoft Town Council to determine the future planning applications, containing a vision of future development, growth and regeneration for the Town.

The referendum result, as reported by East Suffolk Council, was as follows. A total of 2,901 votes were cast with 2,521 for the proposal, 380 against the proposal and 13 ballot papers rejected. This was reported as 87% in favour of the proposal.

However, as 35,724 were eligible to vote, the turnout amounted to 8.2% of those eligible to vote, or to put it another way, 91.8% didn’t vote. The question is why was the turnout so low. Was it just lack a of interest

in the plans, that is, if you managed to read them in full, or being unimpressed with past projects that were not completed successfully or on time.

For example,

The flood barrier now on hold due to funding.

The Cultural Quarter has been on hold due to concern about an established sewer across the site. However, according to an East Suffolk Council post in September 2025, this has led to a redesign and construction should recommence in the Spring with an expected completion date in 2027.

Then there is Eastern Edge, with the specially designed beach huts.

Also the unimpressive changes to Royal Green and the Fountains.

Or have I become a grumpy old man?.

Did you know?

by Katie Sharp

Did you know that Great Yarmouth Towns football club had the first Norfolk football match to be screened on television? Their FA cup qualifying match away to Tooting and Mitcham United was broadcast on the BBC on 11 November 1950 from the Sandy Lane ground in South London.

Great Yarmouth FC did not receive any money for this televised match, but Tooting and Mitcham received 25 Guineas (£26.25), however Great Yarmouth did make £336 from the gate receipts (£10,000) from a crowd of around 7,000 supporters. Great Yarmouth Town were at the time a strong side and even had some paid professional players, even though they were going through a few financial troubles in 1950s.

At this time there were concerns that showing matches on the TV would stop people attending the matches in person by the Football League. Therefore, apart from the FA cup final and some international matches, only lower-level non-league team matches were shown on the BBC.

Great Yarmouth FC lost 5-3 and it was mentioned in the Eastern Daily Press whether this was down to the 'White Ball' being used for the televised event instead of the common orangey-brown one usually used.

The commentators of the match were Jimmy Jewell and Cliff Michelmore.

To learn more about this football match Historian David Tubby has written a book about it. Great Yarmouth's Sporting Heritage, Part 1 the Early Years.

Podcast From Rags to Riches.

by Katie Sharp

This is a podcast on BBC sounds by a fashion historian Amber Butchart, who lived in Kessingland. This is a two-part podcast charting the difference between second hand clothes and vintage clothing. It delves into the history of make do to hand me downs in the 80s to the term vintage clothing. She visits shops, museums and fashion houses to see how the perception in these types of garments has changed. Amber also looks at what happens to the clothes we give to charity shops now and the impact it has.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b08pfqgb?partner=uk.co.bbc&origin=share-mobile>

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