

Volume Forty Four : 2013

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REPORTS OF MEETINGS FOR 2012 plus outings and other points of interest

26 January 2012

“Sinners in the Saints?”

Terry Weatherley

Terry used the 2011 Churches Cycle ride to garner information for his January talk “Sinners in the Saints?”. He borrowed a bike and, with a friend, decided to tour the Saints, a flat area ideal for cycling in north Suffolk where locals say people can get lost for days. Taking photos and collecting details helped him produce an excellent set of slides to illustrate his talk on key features of the cluster of churches all named after Saints, in the Ilketshall and South Elmham parishes. Starting east of the Roman ‘Stone Street’ at the church of Ilketshall St Andrew, the riders planned a route that involved the most churches and the least pedalling, thus making the outlier, South Elmham St James, last in the group. These villages display a good selection of signs, and the group has now earned its own Wikipedia entry.

Ilketshall St Andrew has some recently cleaned wall paintings including a rare example of a wheel of fortune, also a medieval lady, and one of the earliest depictions of a church building. The 14C paintings were professionally restored and many Society members went to see this in progress. Afterwards, taking the narrow lane towards the A144 Bungay to Halesworth Road they came to Ilketshall St John the Baptist. This church has a crooked, or ‘weeping’ chancel, built off-centre to the left, possibly to represent the drooping of Christ’s head on the cross. But were medieval masons that incompetent? The main church was heavily restored in the mid-nineteenth century and the porch in 1908. Funds for a window came from the then Prince of Wales. Relieving arches are among signs of earlier builds, and the slope of the roof shows it was originally thatched. The churchyard has some fine monuments.

Close to the Roman road is Ilketshall St Lawrence church, thought by some to be on the site of a Roman marching camp – it certainly sits on a small platform. According to Christian history St Lawrence was entrusted with the safety of the Holy Grail, sending it to his parents in northern Aragon. He passed this sacred chalice to a friend for delivery to the monastery of Saint John of Pena – it is accepted the chalice has been venerated and preserved by a number of monks and monasteries through the ages. Today a Holy Grail exists in a special Catholic Cathedral chapel in Valencia. Built into the porch wall of St Lawrence is an ancient stone fertility symbol and inside, the church has fine scissor beams.

Across the main road is yet another Ilketshall church, this being dedicated to St Margaret of Antioch. Very popular in the middle ages, she protected pregnant women during childbirth. One of her torments was to be swallowed by the Devil in the shape of a dragon, but she made the sign of the Cross causing the dragon to burst apart. The church has dark paint on the chancel ceiling and a splayed window shows the great thickness of the walls. A round window in the tower (moulded in mortar around a basket) is possibly Saxon. There is evidence of a Norman north door and a priest’s door in Victorian Gothic style.

Terry’s first Saint appears here as Henry Smith, who in 1626 ...*devised a gift to be bestowed in donations of clothing, bread, flesh, or fish, among the poor of the parish of St Margaret, who have been inhabitants above five years...The estates charged with this donation are situated at Tolleshunt D’Arcy, Essex, and produce about £4 per annum.*

Terry’s Sinner here is English Heritage who in 1993 arranged for the tower to be rendered, claiming it was the original finish for flint towers. Everyone, even the Parish Council, voted against it!

Moving to South Elmham, our cyclists came to St Peter, another church gem. Inside it is a fine screen and an harmonium, while the outside is a church anorak’s dream. Here is a perpendicular window replacing a bricked up, early arched one. Here again a bricked up north door – later than the window because the arch is pointed – elsewhere signs of a very large window. Flushwork on the tower and the parapet is high quality, signs of a rich patron in later times. Nearby is St Peter’s Hall. This is now a fine restaurant but the building shows many styles. Mr Tasburgh, an early owner, bought the ecclesiastical windows, porch and associated parts of Flixton Priory. These were of Caen stone, an immensely valuable material where brick and flint were the norm, and only available to the wealthiest sections of society, often the church. In 1538-9 he hired workmen to extend his house and there came more Sinners because... *In the summer of 1539 a feast was held to commemorate completion of the work, and, too much beer was drunk, some guests singing a ballad against the Bishop of Rome (the Pope).* One rumour of a tunnel between the Hall cellars and the church crypt was disproved in the 1940s when a special dig produced no evidence.

The next church of S E St Michael stands surrounded by commons. On approach, a fierce sundial greets the visitor, but the porch protects a fine Norman doorway whose round arch is supported on two typical Norman asymmetric headed columns. The inside of the church is simple, with no chancel arch, and the reredos behind the altar shows St Michael flanked by the local St Felix and St Fursey. St Michael South Elmham is one of only 36 ‘thankful villages’ out of 18,000-odd parishes in the country. Every young man they sent to the First World War returned alive. This was repeated in World War Two, so (almost uniquely in England) there is no war memorial. Only 14 villages had no casualties in either war.

Close by, South Elmham All Saints is in the care of the redundant Churches Trust, though in ancient times it served a congregation large enough to need a side aisle. From its medieval past remain a Purbeck font, on four pillars, and a couple of Flemish roundels set in a jigsaw of medieval glass. One roundel shows St Dorothy with her flowers, the other St Ursula and the ship she set sail in with 5,000 virgins, only to be slaughtered by Huns. Fine carved pew ends include many beasts, some mythical, where the woodcarver showed great imagination.

Next is S E St Margaret, a solid church built in more prosperous times. The flushwork is impressive. The plain interior belies the treasure it contains – a couple of Old Testament Saints, Micah and Isaiah, by FC Eden (a pupil of Butterfield) and interesting graffiti high on the chancel arch. There's a Norman door, and the remains of the screen. Look carefully for the Saint – the Sinners were in the porch as shown by the five-hole stocks.

Furthest west is South Elmham St Cross, dedicated to St George. St Cross (sometimes termed Sancroft) may be a corruption of the Manor of Sancroft although some Norfolk churches are dedicated to the Holy Cross. The church has a couple of early windows and some beautiful graffiti on the door jamb. William Dowsing defaced the angels on the font, which is supported by four lions. The reredos shows a spirited St George. In the graveyard is buried Canadian poet and author Elizabeth Smart. She moved to London and her work had a cult following in the 1960s but by 1966 had retired to a cottage in north Suffolk. In a revival period she produced more literary work, returned to Canada in 1982 for two years, then back to London where she died in 1986.

Early maps of St Cross village show a brick works, and Terry found the Aldous family who ran it also made clay pipes. Their bricks were stamped with a cross and, with care, they can still be found in local walls and paths. South Elmham Hall, a 13th-century bishop's palace, stands nearby within a four-acre moated site. Many features survive here including probably the earliest domestic wall paintings in Suffolk. The ecclesiastical building in a glade beyond the Hall is South Elmham Minster.

The cyclists ran out of time at South Elmham St Mary (now Homersfield) church. This is heavily restored and contains a Tounai-style font with blind arcading, and an oak cover commemorating Edward VII's coronation. The only church in the cluster not reached by the riders was South Elmham St James, slightly to the south. However Terry knew that inside are a number of treasures. They include a medieval carving of St James the Greater with pilgrim staff, the St James gilded wooden cuckoo and two carvings of owls, there are some good brasses and a very pretty reredos behind the altar – a Victorian Gothic cover tops another Tounai-style font.

Terry found more Sinners reported in Suckling's *History of Suffolk*, quoting... 'A case of watch the wall my darling, while the plunderers go by'... Sadly, times do not change!

9 February 2012

“The effects of the plague in Suffolk”

Pip Wright

Pip began by outlining the countrywide records of the bubonic plague that periodically ravaged the population (the black death was recorded as early as 1349). In those times it was widely believed to be a punishment from God, levied on the unfaithful, and to have been spread through exposure to bad air. Some of the public carried containers of sweet smelling unguents, or salts, and herbs that would mask the odours from drains, animals, and sometimes their neighbours, or else (after the 16thC) they smoked. Sadly this precaution did not seem to prevent the plague carrying them off in large numbers. Many other diseases of epidemic proportion existed then, including typhus, cholera, measles, tuberculosis and scarletina, but none made the enormous and sudden impact of the plague. Deaths due to this were sometimes 10 times above average, especially during hot weather, and the end of summer saw the entries for burials in the local registers reach record levels. These waves of plague infection were irregular with sometimes a break of 20 or 30 years between. London and the Home counties experienced more problems from plague than elsewhere because the black rat that carried the plague flea preferred the warmer conditions, as in its normal habitat in the southern parts of Europe, and did not spread far into colder northern Britain. The black rats came to Britain in sailing trade ships that imported cloth and rare goods including spices from eastern ports. The thick thatch of housing in earlier centuries provided the perfect retreat for them as they could exist in close proximity to humans and, if they died in winter, plague fleas dropped down into the house. They found humans a good alternative host, but if not successful were quite capable of surviving for months by hiding within carpets, household linen, or clothing, until the hot weather enabled them to multiply.

The plague was easily recognised as the sufferer developed large swellings (bubos) particularly in the armpits and groin area. The swellings were pus-filled and poisonous and skin discolouration also occurred. There was generally a circular mark around the bite and the victims developed a fever during the incubation period, followed by collapse and death in most cases, although some survived probably due to a natural immunity. The local councillors appointed searchers who looked at bodies to verify the presence of plague. A reversal of the normal burial system then occurred; where funerals had been well advertised daytime events with a coffin, and attended by the public, they now happened at night with as few onlookers as possible, the body wrapped in only a shroud, and frequently tipped with others from the cart into a pit, being then covered in quicklime. London and other big places printed special orders on how to deal with the plague, including by-laws prohibiting movement of residents by land or water. Examiners were appointed who viewed plague areas and put in place precautions

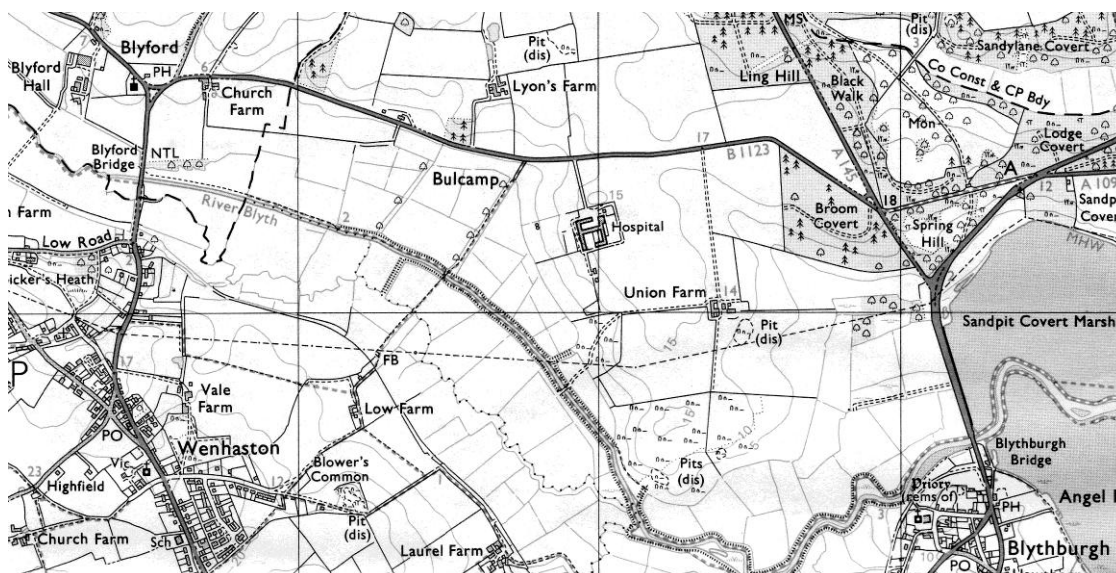
to prevent the spread of the disease. One of these was to mark an exclusion zone with chains. This eventually led to the chain being adopted in England as a unit of measurement. Most of the affluent citizens, including doctors, lawyers and councillors would run off to stay in the country as far as possible from the outbreak. All Fairs and Markets were closed and warning notices erected, near which responsible citizens stood to keep out or negotiate with neighbouring villagers and visitors to try and get supplies, particularly food, for the affected families and townspeople. One interesting means to pay for goods was to drop the money into a tub of vinegar from where it was collected by the supplier when they had delivered the food (mainly vegetables, grain and fruit crops). Pest Houses were erected outside plague towns and were extremely basic rooms, but the idea of removing the sick from the centre of occupation was a good one. People appointed to organise these out of town affairs were given a staff of office and this later provided the idea for the policeman's truncheon.

John Raven, a London doctor, fled to Hadleigh, near Ipswich in 1636, taking the plague with him, and just one year later the bulk of the more affluent local inhabitants had left. Ipswich Borough Minutes record steps were taken there to build six pest houses on the heath outside of town and many deaths had occurred. Bury St Edmunds was then the worst plague spot in the county with 435 dead, affecting over 200 families, but again the chief residents had left town. Ipswich tried to forestall problems in 1665 by taking local loans and building more pest houses in early summer – in July bailiffs were keeping away visitors – even so there were 68 dead by the year end. Bills of mortality had to be submitted monthly and 80% were put down to plague. In 1665-6 the Ipswich death total was 1071 from a population of 8000 or so – and around 1800 had fled the town.

By the late 1600s the worst plague periods were over, and it finally disappeared during the 18th century. Eventually the black rat was wiped out in Britain, although it continued to be a problem in Europe in later centuries. An odd occurrence of plague flared up in the Shotley Peninsula near Ipswich, Suffolk, in the early 1900s resulting in six deaths but that was its parting shot. The World Health Organization says it is now eradicated worldwide.

23 February 2012 – “1836 Poor Law Emigration from Blything” by member Myra Kestner

Myra made this, her first digital slide presentation, a very interesting event. She had earlier taken part in a voluntary cataloguing project for the National Archive that dealt with some correspondence between the Poor Law Commissioners and the Poor Law Union. The project meant transferring information onto a detailed set of forms that were input to the online National Archive website. The area given to her group was the Blything Union (Blything Hundred) in Suffolk and the correspondence (mainly between the Commissioners and local Boards of Guardians) dated from the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act. There were a number of new provisions in the Act to be enforced and many parishes were affected. Myra worked on cataloguing correspondence about helping emigrants move to Canada in 1836, and this sparked off some further private research.



Blything's Board of Guardians met at the Bulcamp Workhouse, centre of map (and now apartments) off the Blythburgh to Halesworth Road. Each parish had one or two persons on the Board, usually local farmers, and the chairman was the principal landowner (in this case Lord Stradbroke). After the Act, the workhouse had been refurbished to forcibly separate men, women and children. (A visiting social reformer Dr Kay had been appalled by the previous conditions where all the inmates including the old and sick were mixed together.) The aim was that all inmates received relief but those outside did not; an aim that was never fully realised. In March 1836 Lord Stradbroke wrote to the Poor Law Commission that there had been trouble at Bulcamp, where 100

Westleton people were housed, and a further 200 outside it were receiving relief. He threatened to shift another 100 into Bulcamp, also to be paid for by the Westleton ratepayers. His main complaint was that farmers employed only one full time labourer per 100 acres, throwing the rest onto the rates for support, but mechanisation was also reducing the numbers required, particularly in winter. Many farmers and labourers in rural parishes wanted to keep the roundsman or ticket system, where labourers were employed as needed, with wages supplemented by parish relief based on the price of bread and size of family. The Commission did not approve this practice and it was being stamped out. His Lordship hoped the Government would not hesitate to send a ship and facilities to enable the ratepayers to send off to Canada all those that were willing to go, saying that every week was of consequence, as an earlier disorder in Ipswich had caused extensive damage.

Parish support for pauper emigration was not new (Blything had already funded a limited emigration to northern industrial areas and to the New World) but now the Poor Law Commission had to see the rulings in the new Act enforced and give approval. Much form filling was involved – not the strong point in every parish. On 30 March 1836 the Blything Guardians contracted with a London agent for two brigs, the *Allendale* and the *Albion*, to be at Lowestoft, one on 14 April and one on 21 April (a circular was issued locally to advertise the sailings to Quebec). Brigs were regularly used for emigration, bringing a timber cargo on their return voyage. A minimum provision of bread, potatoes, biscuit and flour was made and more could be added at the discretion of the parishes. Some in Blything did so – e.g. Covehithe gave tea, coffee, soap, salt, pepper, lard, butter, cheese, sugar and candles. Vestry meetings were held to determine which families or persons should be sent, at the sole expense of the parish, which included onward travel from Quebec. Cratfield parish wrote: ...these families are found in a destitute state for want of clothing; the parish proposes to furnish them with such articles... in addition to other expences as may be necessary. The families on their list had cost the parish £45 during 1835. Family names included Oakes and Barber.

At the time, emigration to Canada was very popular and advertisements appeared in the *Norwich Mercury* for private emigrant voyages at reasonable fares from a number of ports. The Blything emigrant paupers and luggage were taken by cart to Lowestoft, accompanied by parish officers or Guardians who had to certify the correct people went on board. Persons refusing to take ship would have to refund the parish, but there is no record of such refusal despite emigrant ships being lost in transit to Quebec the previous year. Before embarkation the Captain demanded assurances about 'head money' – the Colonial Government in Quebec would reclaim that tax on their arrival. Both ships arrived safely after the six or seven week voyage. There is no surviving description, but the passengers usually slept on temporary wooden berths fixed each side of the hold with only the hatches for ventilation. On arrival 5 shillings 'head money' was demanded from each adult, but some were unable to pay (it was alleged they had used their money to buy spirits from the Captain on the voyage). After they were kept on board for 24 hrs the Captain paid the 'head money' and they disembarked. This led to a lengthy dispute involving the Captain, the Shipping Agent and the Poor Law Commission. In a previous incident when there was a lack of funds, Mr Buchanan the Quebec agent paid for the emigrants' onward travel and it is likely that he did this in the case of the *Allendale* emigrants. He had published a free 'Emigrants Handbook' containing helpful advice on settlement and gaining employment, also on getting assistance for medical and other pauper support (many were going to Upper Canada and the Toronto region, described in the book as 'suitable for large families' with work available there for grown up sons and daughters). It was a protracted journey, taking two or three days and involving three different steamboats.

A letter home from two passengers from the *Allendale* was published in the *Ipswich Journal* of 3 September 1836: Eight emigrant men were listed therein but no mention of their families. One was Edmund Barrett from Wrentham (he had travelled to Canada with his wife and five children). The point of the letter was to advise their relations in Suffolk that all the emigrants had found employment and that there was plenty of work available. Barrett had hired a house with 2 acres of land for 25 dollars per year and found employment at Port Hope. Two of the men worked at driving horses that pulled canal boats, and two more drove teams of horses delivering corn to a mill, and collecting stores (far better, said one, than working for a farmer). Prior to their emigration, the Revd Clissold of Wrentham had described these characters as 'not such as to make their residence in his parish desirable'. The letter from Canada ended 'give our respects to our English masters and tell them if they come to America they will have to run about after men as much as men run after work in England'.

Most of the emigrants were from farm labourer's families with the adults in their 20s, 30s and 40s, so it was very likely that they would find work and have a good chance of successful settlement in their new home. Lord Stradbroke, in his address to the Blything Board of Guardians on 6 January 1837 stated: that during 1836, 524 individuals – 173 men, 106 women and 245 children – were sent to the British Colonies, plus 130 going to manufacturing districts in this country. The limited evidence from the records does suggest the moves were a success for the emigrants and also for the parish ratepayers back in Suffolk.

8 March 2012

“Victorian Health and Sickness”

Katrina Siliprandi

Katrina, from Norwich Castle Museum’s Education Department, is responsible for Learning Development and her talk covered health changes due to scientific and social development during the Victorian era. Public Health reports in the 1840s showed the startling fact that Britain, by then a world-leading country, had shockingly poor living standards. Its main urban centres were growing at a furious rate but were beset with problems of disease and lack of sanitation. The life expectation for professional and better off persons averaged 38 yrs, while labourers averaged just 17 yrs. The cause was linked to the Industrial Revolution – large factories had appeared, mainly in the Midlands and the North and attracted labourers from outside the area causing the towns to become overcrowded. The driving power for their machinery was steam, the latter produced cheaply using the plentiful coal supplies available in that location. In the early days business flourished and fortunes were made but, as industries developed, there came a point where pollution from smoke (to the air) and chemicals and sewage (to the water supplies) brought misery.

Overcrowding was rife in Manchester in 1844 – more than 18,000 people lived in cellars – the water supply was hard to obtain and, what was connected, only worked intermittently – few houses had water closets. The night soil men took away sewage once or twice per week and sold it as fertilizer to local farmers, hardly a healthy system. Many people collected water daily from local pumps or wells to use for cooking and washing, but had limited storage facilities, and nothing worked well (in parts of London water pipes worked for only 2hrs on three days each week). People were tempted into using water from ponds and pits and consequently diseases, especially of the waterborne variety, were hard to eradicate – death rates were high and health concerns grew apace. Those who were well off then fled the cities and towns for clean living in the country – the remainder stayed in their smoke-filled, cramped, dwellings. The water supply in Norwich was very poor in 1850, but the residents were 25% paupers so there was no enthusiasm for a change that would increase their rents. Gradually pumping stations began to be built, the Sanitary Act passed (1866) and another 1875 Act saw water and sewage systems improve. Science began to help too in the 1870s with new medicines to fight infection, but slum clearance only got going in the late 1800s.

Education in medicine was generally poor in the 1800s until the Royal College of Physicians was established. In the early days bleeding, by use of fleams or leeches, was seen as a cure-all but had little impact. Prescribed drugs often contained toxic chemicals or metals that were not good for patients whose diet and hygiene were already poor. The realisation that disease could be spread by contact came slowly, and patients in crowded hospitals even shared beds. Operating theatres were not sterile and floors were covered in sawdust; surgeons and staff wore no protective gloves or gowns, but sometimes a coat that would be changed after a few months (spectators were allowed to sit and watch the proceedings). No anaesthetic meant surgery was fast to minimise the pain. Amputations were common and, with those conditions, sepsis came quickly, the death rate averaging 26 per cent. At this time, workhouses were often providing better care than the recognised hospitals. Around 1844 ether had been tried in the USA as an anaesthetic during dental extractions. Liston tried it successfully at University Hospital but the smell was not good and it irritated the eyes, so with Simpson and other colleagues he switched to chloroform, later to be used during birthing.

Accepting Pasteur’s theory that infection was caused by micro-organisms, Lister, in 1870, began to spray operating areas and equipment with carbolic acid to fight the problem. Wound dressings and gut for sutures were also treated. There was then a move away from the foul, poorly ventilated, closed rooms in the big houses used as hospitals, and Victorian wards began to use antiseptic and clean water, although sterilisation of instruments was some way off.

Nursing, often the role of Religious Orders, was primitive in the early 1800s. Patients weren’t washed (especially their feet) nor bedding changed. Then Florence Nightingale came into nursing and by 1853 had started her great work. The party of nurses she led in the Crimean war achieved miracles and returned highly regarded. New training was set up and the profession became respected as quite fit for any woman. This also brought a new era of light, cleanliness, air and warmth to hospitals. By the end of the century Marie and Pierre Curie were investigating radium and brought the age of x-rays, but sadly Pierre succumbed to radiation at an early age. Clinics were introduced at that time, although home remedies and quack doctors were to survive into the 1900s. The good news for working class women was that their local midwives, with years of experience, were often better than the incumbent doctors.

22 March 2012

“The Lowestoft Porcelain Trail”

Chris Brooks

Some years ago Chris teamed up with the late Jane Jarvis to tell the history of the 18th-century Lowestoft Porcelain Factory and its 20th-century namesake. The Chelsea pottery in London had produced English porcelain in 1745, and by 1750 had been joined by factories in the provinces.

The first porcelain at Lowestoft was developed between 1757 and 1759 using a fine white clay found in the north of the town at Gunton. The main partners, who had limited experience in tile and brickmaking, were Philip

Walker, Obediah Aldred and Robert Browne, and the business was quite small to begin with, being based between Crown Street and Bell Lane (the main road into the town at the time). Surprisingly, their output was of good quality, some said better than Delftware. The factory had a life span of some 45 years, closing in about 1802. Chris had slides of the street plan of the town in the 1700s when there was no real development south of Lake Lothing. The lack of a bridge where Lake Lothing entered the sea meant visitors to Lowestoft approached from Yarmouth via Oulton village or from the south via Mutford. The plan pinpointed the factory site and showed how small and simple the town was in those days. The factory increased in size, later involving over 90 people, and was equipped with two coal-fired kilns. The blue porcelain produced in the first few years was inexpensive and about half was exported through Holland and France; these delicately painted early pieces are now very rare. Clay had been dug for generations at a number of places near to Lowestoft, for brick and tile manufacture, before the interest in porcelain occurred. There was a suitable clay pit for the latter on land owned by the Fowler family who lived at Gunton Old Hall (the footings of which remain, with an ancient well, off Gunton Church Lane). A kiln, possibly used for trial firings, was excavated in the 1950s beneath a garden lawn at Glebe Close, not far from Gunton Church Lane but was then covered over and left in situ. A second clay pit was by the Warren Houses, near the spring by the Dell at the bottom of the cliffs just north of Links Road. (Older members may remember the pools below the spring that were improved by Harry Dowsett of Brooke Marine but fell into decay after the war.). Chris then took members on a picture tour of buildings associated with the original Porcelain Factory and also places where collections of the porcelain, now highly-valued, may be seen today. The most important of these are the Victoria & Albert Museum at South Kensington, Norwich Castle Museum, the Lowestoft Museum in Broad House at Everitt's Park, Oulton Broad (where both porcelain and moulds are displayed), and the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge.



Teapot decorated by an anonymous artist (known as the Tulip Painter) -- also 6 inch moulded bowl plus octagonal caddy

Products ranged from tea caddies, pots, bowls and saucers, to plates and coffee pots, jugs (including the 'sparrow beak' variety) spoon trays, ewers, vases and invalid feeding cups. A sideline was their range of souvenir items entitled "A Trifle from Lowestoft". These were popular, and they supplied "Trifle from" souvenirs for a number of other East Anglian towns. A limited number of human and animal figures were made and some commemorative bowls and plaques (plus the only birth plaques made in this country). Items were either thrown or slip moulded, then fired at about 1050°C, being at first decorated by hand in cobalt blue or polychrome. Later, transfer printing and enamels were also used. Early pieces imitated oriental designs but many local scenes were recorded in the following years. One anonymous decorator specialised in tulips, but Robert Allen is probably the best-known Lowestoft porcelain painter and was very skilful at calligraphy. Late in life he painted a window for St Margaret's church in Lowestoft (still in the chancel). The decorators worked in cottages near the factory or took pieces home to finish. Morse's Brewery took over the factory premises in the early 1800s and traded on into the 20th century. During later building work on the site a disused basement area was uncovered containing a large amount of wasters (spoiled or broken pottery) and moulds.

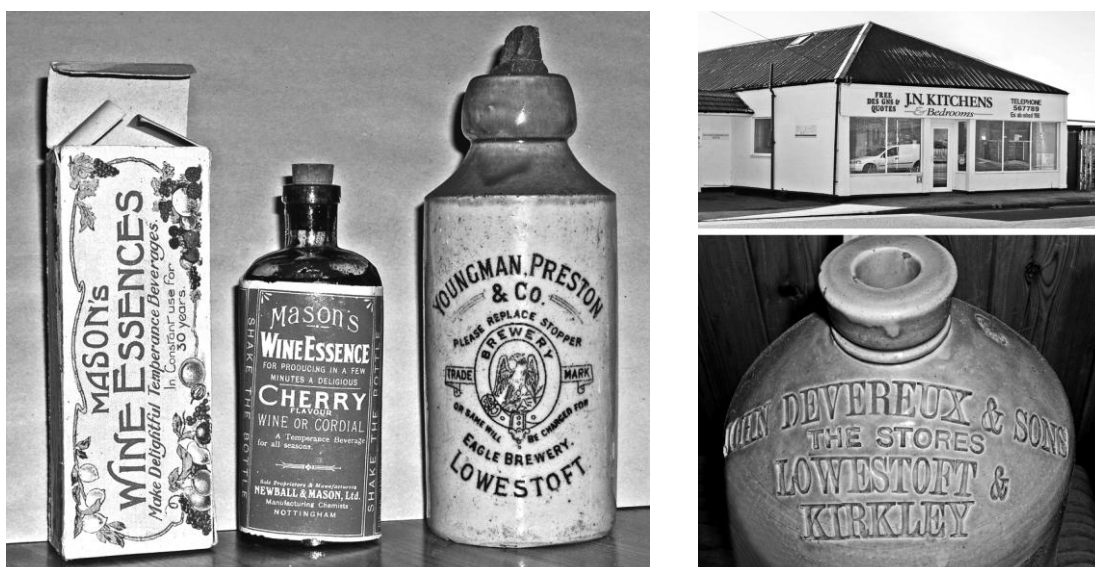
In the late 1900s an enterprising businessman in south Lowestoft attempted to revive the porcelain industry, copying some of the original designs, but using modern slip casting and firing techniques. Local employees were trained in the moulding and fettling and also worked hard to interpret the hand painting of the originals, with some success. The company traded quite well initially, and later moved to larger premises north of the bridge. Several ideas were tried there, including a hands-on approach where customers could be involved in the production sequence, but some years later the proprietor died and the main company ceased trading. However Colin Challis, a designer and decorator, is still able to handle commissions for some of their unique, commemorative porcelain items via his studio at the Lowestoft Arts Centre near the Triangle.

12 April 2012

“Lowestoft’s Lost Village”

Colin Dixon

Colin, a member of the Lowestoft Maritime Museum, was born in a Morrison shelter at 4 Wilde Street in the Beach Village, commonly known as ‘The Grit’ by its residents. Subsequently his parents moved up the cliff into town, but he spent much of his childhood visiting his grandmother, relatives and school-friends in the Grit – that part of the Denes stretching from the large yacht pond and sea-water swimming pool at the north end, along to the fish market. Colin had a superb selection of period pictures to illustrate his talk. The Grit featured terraces of small cottages intermixed with shops and a bewildering variety of businesses, the latter mostly connected to the town’s fishing industry. In the early 1800s there were well over 2000 inhabitants occupying the self-contained tenements and many worked within sight of their homes. These homes were mostly very basic two-up and two-down, without damp course, bathroom or conveniences, but even so, local families were often in double figures. Education was mainly taken care of by Wilde’s School, Mariners Score School and the Central School. At that time all shipbuilding and maritime trading was carried out on the beach, as were landings and sales of sea-fish, using barrows or horse and cart. The River Waveney was linked to an inland area of freshwater, separated from the sea by a bar of shingle, roughly where the pier heads are today, but there was no through access to the sea until the passage was opened in 1831 by the Norwich & Lowestoft Navigation Company. That development instantly created a more sheltered place in which to land goods and fish, and to carry out maintenance on local and visiting ships, thus generating more profitable and vibrant business openings close at hand for residents of The Grit, and bringing them a wide variety of jobs.



Artist and designer Eric Delf (son of Alan Delf, whose corner shop stood where John Grose now has its showroom) found the wine essence in the 1950s, in its original packet, on a dusty shelf in Boothroyd’s shop, at the foot of Herring Fishery Score, where he lived for a time. The stone bottle held Ginger Beer that was one by-product of the Eagle Brewery. The ‘Kitchens’ showroom (next to the site of the fish-market original main entrance and sale-ring) used to be the Ship’s Provision Store of Devereux’s Grocery business that at its peak had 14 stores across East Anglia. *Photographs © Don Friston*

As the settlement grew, so did the need for suppliers – bakers, dairies and butchers were among the early ones to appear, also grocery stores, coal merchants, and of course pubs (more than a dozen) and, on the credit side, five churches; North Beach Bethel, Christchurch, Methodist Chapel, Salvation Army and (later) the Battery Green Bethel. The gas-works, with its side products of coke and tar, employed many, although Youngman, Preston & Co. (Eagle Brewery) in Rant Score played its part – smaller, but far more numerous were fish curing houses. Chandlers and ship’s provision merchants did well, supplying vessels of all types. No one could ignore the fat-and-bone factory, secure behind a large wall and employing only two workers, but emanating a vile stink that beat the gas-works into the distance. Watsons ran a large steam laundry; there was an undertaker, a sweep and a slaughterhouse; more than one cobbler, a barber, a fish-and-chip shop and several coopers and tinsmiths; also many residents worked seasonally in the herring industry and, as beatsters, making nets. Below the *Highlight* were many rows of wooden rails on which herring nets were hung to dry. A few are preserved today. The herring workers were joined, in season, by hundreds of Scots people who followed the migratory shoals around the coast, and would work at Lowestoft from late September to early December, while being accommodated in the homes of local families who were glad to have the extra income from letting their rooms. The start of the season was heralded by the arrival of huge stacks of wooden barrels on the ‘pickling plots’, the area between the gas-works and Hamilton Road where gutting and packing of herring for export took place. Colin told how

youngsters would play among the barrels, hiding within them when the watchman arrived. After the Scots-girls gutted the fish, they were packed in radial layers within the barrels that would then be filled with strong brine 'pickle' and capped. Those fish went mainly to the Continent. Many more tons of herring were preserved in the local smokehouses as kippers, bloaters, or red herrings, or left town by rail.

Both wars brought hard times to the Beach Village as fishermen were called for active duty in the Army and Navy. World War 2 was particularly bad as Lowestoft's position was close to the action, suffering many raids. In 1941 a parachute mine narrowly missed the gas-works and seriously damaged over 400 houses. One month later the Central school was destroyed, with loss of life. Bad times continued after the war, when in 1946 the Mobb's sea wall collapsed, and only a few years later came the 1953 floods. The latter spelled the end of hope for the old community as, in addition to heavy war damage, the ancient buildings could not then be repaired at reasonable cost. Large-scale demolition began and new businesses started moving in. North Sea gas replaced Town gas and the catastrophic end of the fishing, with its related services, forced the former residents into a different life-style. Only a few buildings remain from the 'Lost Village' but there are many fond memories.

26 April 2012**"Frederick Dodington and The Rule of Three"****Don Friston**

In 2000, the village of Carlton Colville celebrated the Millennium with a two-day exhibition in the community centre on the village's history, and it was decided that a book, based on the exhibition, should be produced. Its contents featured notes on the Dodington family, and a request was published in the *Journal* for a picture of Grove Farm – demolished in the 1970s. A lady replied. Not only did she provide the farm picture, she had other documents on the family, who were influential in the village from the late 1850s until well after the First World War. The additional information she contributed did much to enrich the book. Sometime later, she produced a slim foolscap-sized, hard bound schoolbook that had belonged to her grandfather. Inside were several pages of mathematical exercises, written in a superb copperplate style, demonstrating the use of the 'Rule of Three' – a recognised method of calculation in the Victorian period. The pink coloured title page features fourteen-year-old Frederick Dodington's name, written in large letters across the centre in red wash ink, with a black shadow, and covered with a pattern of small circles in red ink, with tiny curved brackets. Beautifully drawn ovals in fine black pen surround the name and neatly written within is 'BECCLES ACADEMY 1868'. This no doubt was a 'passing out' piece to show young Frederick's skill and educational progress at the Cowles Academy, at that time situated at 44 Northgate, Beccles. (Records show that in 1851 there were 41 boy pupils. Most were from Norfolk and Suffolk, four from Kent and one from the north. There were none from London. In 1878, the Academy was bought by Alfred Hockey and moved to Ballygate, to be much extended.*) Don was intrigued by the Beccles schoolbook and wanted to discover more about its young writer who had died aged only 32. * Details kindly supplied by David Lindley, Beccles History Recorder.

The Dodington family roots in Suffolk have been traced back to Godfrey Dodington, born about 1680, most probably in Sotterley. A family tree has been put together to show just some of their history. Frederick died very young in Carlton Colville and when his book came to light, over 100 years later, there was no family member surviving who could remember any details of his early life. However, 19th-century public records and contemporary house deeds were to provide some answers. Frederick's father, James Samuel Dodington, was the youngest of nine children born in Barnby to Henry and Sarah Dodington (licencees of the Blind Man's Gate public house from before 1820 until the 1860s). James became a wheelwright and in 1853, aged 24, married Susannah Heavers from Somerleyton, where they settled and soon had two children; Frederick Henry Dodington (our mathematics wizard to be) and his sister Mary Heavers Dodington.

James's father-in-law, Robert Heavers, was a bricklayer, nearing retirement, and must have done well as in 1855 he purchased a piece of land in Carlton Colville near the Bell public house. He decided to help his daughter Susannah, and son-in-law James, by setting up a deal whereby in February 1856 the latter became part owner of the land along with Robert's son, William Heavers, who also took over a grocery shop on site. James (probably to find extra work as a wheelwright) took his family to live at Carlton in late 1856 or early 1857. In the next four years three more children arrived, Arthur, and George, and a girl, Emma Jane.

In the 1861 census Frederick, the first-born, was listed as a scholar, living with his parents and siblings in Carlton Street very close to no. 44, the grocery shop run by his uncle and aunt (Susannah's brother William Heavers and his wife Mary). William's father Robert, now retired, lodged at the grocery shop. Looking next at the 1871 census, Frederick (aged 16) had moved into no. 44 (working as shop assistant) meanwhile Robert Heavers had died. The following census, in 1881, showed major changes because Frederick was now in charge of the grocery shop, had married Julia Cole (in 1876) and they had produced two children, Emma and William. His sister-in-law Maria Cole was lodging with them and was listed as shop assistant. William Heavers, aged 63, was now a widower and seems to have been part retired; he also boarded with them at the shop and had taken up some duties as a road surveyor in Carlton.

Other public records show that by 1883 Frederick and Julia had two more children, Louisa and Annie. Shortly after Annie was born, William Heavers died, without issue, and in his will left the house, shop and adjoining land

solely to Frederick. Just four years later this good fortune turned sour when in October 1887, aged 32, Frederick died (possibly of consumption) leaving Julia to run the shop and care for their four children. She did have help though, because the April 1891 census lists Julia with four children, plus her sister Maria and also their mother Elizabeth Cole [a widow, living on own means]. Sadly, May 1891 brought another bereavement in their family with Frederick and Julia's treasured eldest daughter Emma dying, aged only 13.

So how was it possible in those times of such stress that a handwritten schoolbook survived? Probably because Julia Dodington was a strong-minded woman, pushed by circumstances into being the head of the household. She had to be well organised to manage a general shop and, no doubt, ran her house the same way. Within ten years she had Record House built, for her own use, on land she purchased next to the village pond, not far from a marshy piece known as the 'Mardle' by the Carlton Bell pub. From 1901 she let out the shop (a post office had then been added) to Walter Ramsey who, with his family, stayed as tenants until the 1960s, when post office business was transferred to Rounces Lane. Julia's remarkable life closed in 1944 when she was 91.

Frederick's book was deposited with a copy of the Dodington family tree (the latter in both printed and digital format) in the Lowestoft Public Records Office in October 2007. The fabric of the book and its binding were in first class condition although the writing ink had faded during its 139-year storage, despite being kept in the dark. It should remain in the Public Records Office, so that future generations may see just what skills were required of Victorian students setting out in their early teenage on a business career. It is surely no accident that James Dodington, wheelwright in a small Suffolk village, sent his eldest son seven miles away to an Academy to study. His other children were listed occasionally in the record books of Carlton Village School.

Postscript: The biggest surprise came in 2010, when Mrs Cook, the surviving granddaughter of Frederick and Julia Dodington, suddenly produced another handwritten document, done forty years before Frederick's book. This was a Christmas message written in 1827 at Middleton School, near Leiston, Suffolk, in which 12-year-old Henry Ablett (Julia's uncle) thanks his parents for providing his education. Again the work is produced in coloured ink and is carefully written in copperplate style, but this time with a decorative border. Obviously the family interest in fitting their children for life with a good education was passed down, but how extraordinary that two examples of this survived in storage across 185 years and several generations.

10 May 2012 Members visit to Somerleyton Hall Gardens, plus buffet meal

After heavy rain during the afternoon, members paid an evening visit to the 12-acre gardens surrounding the picturesque Somerleyton Hall that in the 1840s was owned by the entrepreneur Sir Morton Peto. The weather held out during the visit, but it was a little wet underfoot. The tour, guided by the head gardener, was excellent as was the meal afterwards. Also, thankfully, we did not lose anyone in the maze. The gardens are renowned for their wide variety of splendid specimen trees, including eucalyptus, pine, cedars, a tulip tree and mature limes. An ongoing programme exists to help replace the occasional tree loss due to gales and old age, and they are interspersed with a multitude of shrubs, borders and plants, both native and imported, providing colour and contrast throughout the year. We saw a very good selection of colour in flowers and shrubs, despite this being late spring, and of course the foliage specimens were at their freshest. The tour first went through to the walled gardens and old glasshouses, the latter erected by Joseph Paxton in the period following the Great Exhibition, using similar designs to the Crystal Palace for its roofing and framework. Oranges and other citrus fruits were grown, as well as grapes, peaches etc. The glasshouses had heating and clever ventilation, with drainage routed through the support columns.

After this the group was taken through an ancient and lengthy pergola of wisteria, grown over the years into grotesque forms around its arching support frame. The next feature was the maze designed by Nesfield, a celebrated landscape gardener, and planted with yew in 1846 with a small, raised central pagoda. Recognised as one of the finest in the country, its hedges are cut on opposite sides in alternate years to encourage a dense, even structure. In today's conservation-conscious system nothing is wasted and all trimmings are recycled through the estate. The walk continued, to cover several areas, including huge specimen trees and rare varieties of shrub including examples of topiary. We were also shown some elegant statuary that has survived many generations, and could view the hall and stables from most faces, including the newly restored sunken 'white' garden. It is impossible to miss the very handsome tower housing an historic striking clock, designed in open competition, in 1847, by Vulliamy for use in the New Houses of Parliament. His design proved too costly at that time, but Morton Peto bought the model for himself and had the tower at Somerleyton built to house it.

Sadly Peto's wide-ranging building and railway construction businesses crashed after a time and he was forced to sell up. However, the Crossley family have been efficient stewards over many years and the Hall's future looks assured. The evening was rounded off by a splendid evening buffet in the restored buildings and our guide ably fielded questions on the Hall and Gardens from the guests.

28 June 2012

Churches Outing and Supper

led by Terry Weatherley



We met at the attractive Church of the Ikon of the Mother of God, adjacent to the White House, off Low Road in Mettingham on a fine evening. Fr Andrew welcomed the group and guided us into the church that stands in extensive grounds that contain the grave of the foundress, this being one of only a handful of purpose-built Russian Orthodox churches in this country. He explained how the site was chosen and plans developed for the interesting and unusual octagonal design, of white painted wooden construction, with blue roof, topped with cupolas and crosses in traditional style. Orthodox churches had been in use for some time at Felixstowe and at Colchester but the local group had searched many years for a building to convert in Norfolk or Suffolk. After trying various places, including chapels at Bungay and Topcroft, the decision was made to build from scratch. The present church site was selected and the designs went ahead after some curious suggestions by the planners that the size of the main building should be increased, and the roof should be of metal. Generous benefactors have been able to supply the church with traditional furnishing and many ikons. Members were surprised to see such a fine and richly coloured interior, in what seemed a relatively small area. The decision not to have seating allows for suitably large groups to attend when the occasion demands. The new Ikon for Our Lady of Mettingham uses details from the representation of the Mother of God depicted on the seal of the ancient Mettingham College, destroyed in 1543. The Ikon will be installed at the house that will function in future as a chantry college, to be named *College of Our Lady of Mettingham*. The church also has links with the ancient church of St Botolph at Iken, near Snape.

Some days later, Terry thanked Fr Andrew for welcoming us to the Church, offering some pictures taken during the visit, and received the following reply.

“Terry – Thanks for your kind comments. We look forward to getting the pictures. Maybe some can be used on the website. I hope your members will not see their visit simply as a one-off because we welcome people at any time and church is always open during the day. Sometimes people feel that they would be trespassing on private property but this is not the case. We had a very nice day at Iken on Saturday and made some new friends there. Sometimes there is a perception that Orthodox churches are ethnic ghettos but we most certainly are not. We really want to show that we are part of the local community and proud of the local heritage.

With best wishes – Fr Andrew”

From Mettingham the group went on to the magnificent medieval church of St Michael the Archangel in the centre of Beccles. It has been at the centre of life in the town since its foundation in 1369. This church is sited on high ground that looks out over the River Waveney and the marshes beyond, and has a massive tower set slightly apart from the main building, and containing a hang of ten bells. The tower is open for visitors to climb in summer, and commands a spectacular panoramic view of both Norfolk and Suffolk landscapes from its position almost on the county boundary. This church is an impressive structure with some very elaborate and attractive stonework, and contains hatchments and many fine monuments within its nave, the latter having north and south aisles to emphasize its width. It has links to a number of well-known families including a previous curate, Edmund Nelson, who married Catherine Suckling, from nearby Barsham. They were the parents of Horatio Nelson. The church also saw the marriage of poet George Crabbe in 1783 and is the burial place of madrigal composer William Cobold (1560–1639). The church is well served by its incumbents who have provided comprehensive information boards to guide the visitor around its many interesting features.

Afterwards a number of the Society members gathered to enjoy a pre-arranged meal and social at the *Three Horseshoes* pub at North Cove.

13 September 2012

“Lowestoft 500–1500”

David Butcher

For this talk, David partly took the theme of his new book, to be published by the Heritage Centre this month, dealing with the Half-hundred of Lothingland. The book is mostly based on information in the 1086 Domesday survey of this country, and the Hundred Rolls of 1274. Our local area has revealed remains of Neolithic, Bronze-Age, Iron-Age and Anglo-Saxon settlements; and the Romans were also located nearby at Burgh Castle. Other settlers came from Scandinavia and, in the 10th to 11th centuries, would have found landings easy as many places had sloping beaches, often backed by sparsely populated, low heathland. So began the slow build-up of the population prior to the Norman Conquest. The Royal Manor of Lothingland filled the area between the half-hundred of Mutford, and the town of Gorleston (originally in Suffolk). Ralph Ballistarius was a member of the new, ruling, Norman elite. The English Hundred was an administrative unit of 100 *hides* (each of 120 acres) known post-Conquest as *carucates*. Lothingland had some fifty-two hides, but neighbouring Mutford only twenty-seven. The two units may have been considered as one, although separated by a freshwater lake (*Lake Lothing*) cut off from the sea by a shingle bank.

The Hundred Rolls of 1274 were commissioned by Edward I to form a fiscal survey of all England, but only the Lothingland record has survived for the northern part of Suffolk. Lothing, as a name, was probably formed from the Old English *hluda* and *-ing*, suggesting descendants of *Hluda* (“the loud one”). Lowestoft’s name is made up of *Hloðver* and *toft* – A Scandinavian form of the parish where *Hluda* made his home. The name Mutford derives from the Old English *mot* (meeting) and *ford* (shallow place in water).

No doubt there were taxes payable to the Crown from its estates, based on the findings of the survey and, as always, there were those who administered (and took profits from) the scheme. Taxes were either paid in cash or by labour- service to the individual manors. The area was divided into settlements (*vills*) and estates, in which were manors, holdings and outliers (or *berewicks*), overseen by various lords and earls reporting to the Crown. A number of vills took the names of important local families and can be recognised today, albeit with slightly altered spelling, while others have been absorbed into adjoining parishes. At Domesday, those living and working on the manors and estates were classified in descending order of importance as *Thegns* – under the earls, and controlling the *Freemen* – who were able to hold land in return for rent, and sometimes to dispose of it; *Villans* – a skilled class of workers who might hold land for profit or subsistence; *Bordars* – a middle-class of general labourers, also allocated subsistence holdings; *Slaves* – who were given menial but essential tasks at the lowest level, with in-house accommodation or the simplest of lodgings. Local overlords included Gyrrh Godwinson, for Lothingland and Mutford (pre-Conquest) plus Roger Bigot (Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk) for Lothingland, post-Conquest. The overlords had many land-holders under them and sometimes controlled the churches too. The hub of Mutford half-hundred was a 420-acre, large manor in the village of Mutford itself, while Gorleston (with a manor of 600 acres) was the Lothingland equivalent. Estates would have held a limited number of cattle (mainly for ploughing teams) plus a few horses for the rich to ride. Pigs were more common and were allowed to forage (*shack*) in the local woodland – all common and heathland was strictly managed at that time. Substantial numbers of sheep were also kept in some communities.

The inhabitants of Lowestoft in the 11th century are believed to have lived in the low-lying area to the north of Lake Lothing, close to what is now known as Cemetery Corner. They were mostly concerned with fishing and agriculture, along with some bartering for everyday food and essentials. (Lowestoft seems to have become a manor by 1212 and, by 1274, shared control of the half-hundred with Gorleston.) Around 1300, the townspeople started a gradual migration to the elevated cliff area that was to become Lowestoft High Street. An ingenious system of terracing was carried out to make practical use of the cliff for buildings and gardens, allowing development from the north end of the town, down to the location of the present docks. The beach was then used for shipbuilding and maritime trading and, in the next two centuries, the fishing industry expanded, with its main merchants living along the seaward side of the High Street. Certain manors, in surrounding parishes (including Corton, Somerleyton and Oulton), held plots of land between the cliff and the original settlement, from where the town had re-located, and in addition there were six heath areas. To the north was another settlement named Akethorpe, on land later held by Magdalen College, Oxford. An early church existed at Akethorpe, possibly on the site now occupied by Lowestoft St. Margaret’s (parts of the latter date from the 14th century). Lowestoft was listed at number 14 in the 1320 Lay subsidy, but by 1524 it headed the list of successful towns and manors in Lothingland Half-hundred.

27 September 2012**“The History of Lighthouses”****Keith Seaman**

Having spent many years working at or maintaining lighthouses, Keith is well qualified to talk about their history and operations. His family connections began with his grandfather, who was a principal keeper, and then his uncle who also worked in lighthouses. Sadly the job of ‘lighthouse keeper’ no longer exists as since 1997, in common with the UK lightships, they have all been fully automated and de-manned.

Monks first used light signals on cliffs and headlands to alert lookouts on vessels approaching their shores. The Romans built some splendid ones and a few remain today. The oldest example still working is at Coruña in northern Spain; in the UK are the remains of a tower close to the seaside church at Dover, and a heavily refurbished light at Flamborough Head on the East Coast. All these early structures were topped by brushwood fires, and must also have been visible, in certain conditions, from the smoke they produced. The first Lowestoft lighthouse was coal-fired, and built close to the site of the present one. In 1513 Henry VIII gave a charter to Trinity House requiring them to mark safety hazards, but this was mostly through the use of buoys and shore signals – private operators provided the first lighthouses. Before 1836, any person could petition to erect and operate a lighthouse, for which service they could charge a fee to shipping. John Brown wanted to put one at Corton in the 1600s, but Samuel Pepys offered to operate the Lowestoft one that he was then installing, free of tolls, effectively ruining Brown’s plan.

Trinity House bought up all the private lighthouses in 1836 and became responsible for fee collection. The ships had their voyages checked port to port, were listed for local lighthouse service when they docked, and a bill for the total sent to the owners for payment. A modified system is in use today with the duties shared between 3 Boards covering Scotland, Ireland and the UK. All dues are collected via the Harwich office, with Westminster setting the fees.

Famous lighthouses: Henry Winstanley erected a wooden tower on the *Eddystone Rock* in the late 1600s but it soon suffered sea damage. Despite it being modified, all the crew were lost in 1703 when a severe storm destroyed it; John Rudyard erected a new tower of wood and stone with a lead roof. Candles set fire to wood in this lantern top in 1755 and the lead melted, pouring down on keeper, Henry Hall, who died from internal injuries. John Smeaton then built a granite tower using dovetailed blocks. This was more durable, but eventually the sea undermined it in 1877. The Douglas family then built a fourth one that survives today, using Robert Stevenson’s development of Smeaton’s dovetailed stone system. A helicopter pad is fitted above the light now to enable easier access for maintenance staff.

Other famous names include *Bell Rock* where, circa 1808, Robert Stevenson used the interlocking dovetailed stone blocks and curving profile that proved to be the best design to successfully withstand the power of the sea (it too exists today). The *Longstone*, off Northumberland, was associated with heroine Grace Darling, who carried out a rescue with her father, the keeper, during a storm in 1838. The *Fastnet Rock*, Ireland, is forever linked to the famous yacht race, but the *Smalls Reef* lighthouse in the mid Irish Sea is remembered for bringing a change in manning procedure. Initially, two keepers served up to three-months duty on each lighthouse, but here one died of a heart attack shortly after arrival. The other could not attract the attention of passing vessels, and much later, when the relieving party finally arrived, instead of assistance for his distracted and exhausted state he was thought to have murdered his fellow-keeper. The truth was then revealed and from that time a minimum of three keepers instituted.

Early lights were of low power, but when Fresnel, the French engineer, invented a special ribbed glass lens that intensified the strength of the beam, things improved. The advent of more-and-more powerful electric lamps meant that ships could pick up their position much earlier and recognize lighthouses from the type, colour, and frequency of their flashes. Keith covered the very interesting history of the Lowestoft lighthouses at some length, plus some local lightships (the latter now replaced by automated buoys) and the sandbanks and channels they represented.

11 October 2012**“The Herring Girls”****Chris Unsworth**

Chris has studied the history of the Scots girls who worked a 12-week season in Great Yarmouth in the early 20th-century heyday of the autumn herring fishing. However, he acknowledged the ‘girls’ (they varied in age from teens to matrons) would have already worked for curers at fishing ports on Scotland’s west coast, working their way up via the Orkneys to Shetland by early summer and, as the season progressed, on down the east coast to the substantial East Anglian ‘home’ fishing. Their work was repetitive, but required a high degree of manual skill in gutting and packing the herring harvest, not to mention an iron constitution to survive the often, bitter cold of outdoor work in October and November at Yarmouth and Lowestoft. The critical quirk of nature that allowed this continuity of work, over six months, was that along the coast existed several sub-species of herring that bred and matured at slightly different times of year. These fish varied in size, requiring the use of nets having a suitable gauge to maximise the catch in each area. Herring girls normally had a fishing family background – Scotch fishing families often owned, or at least had shares in their boats, unlike English fishermen who usually worked for owners based at a port, where they may also have owned or rented an office and space at

the local fish docks. Depending on the size of catches, the gutting work varied in intensity, but the girls usually found time to meet relatives whose boats were landing herrings at the nearby quay. Scottish fisher-folk did not work on Sundays so that often caused pressure on Saturdays.

Most fishing ports had areas (plots) where the unsorted herrings could be tipped into large open-topped wooden troughs called *farlanes*, then salted by the coopers. Teams of girls, each consisting of two gutters and one packer surrounded the troughs. The gutters leaned over, selected the fish and with one deft twist of their knife removed the gills and gut, dropping the waste into the gut tub and the cleaned fish into a range of up to seven tubs behind them, marked for selected size and quality. An experienced girl gutted an average 50 to 60 fish per minute. The packer meanwhile, transferred the cleaned fish into pickling barrels each holding about 900 to 1200 fish of the selected size. Fish were packed belly up with heads to the side of the barrel; alternate layers were laid at right angles and sprinkled with salt, which gradually melted to form the pickle. When the barrel was full the fish were left for several days to settle; the pickle was then drained off and saved – more fish would then be added to fill the barrel before the cooper re-sealed the top, the pickle was poured back in, and the bung replaced. The full barrels were branded with the grade of herring and a stamp to show their port of origin. The latter could be traced in case of complaint – important when they were exported as far as Germany, Poland and Russia, where the curer's inspectors would be based.

In the early years the *farlanes* stood low to the ground, causing the gutters some severe back problems, but later, they were raised to a better height by adding wooden supports. Teams of girls became expert and then kept together as they could earn more, sometimes packing over thirty barrels in a day when conditions were favourable. Hours were long, the girls starting as early as 6am and sometimes working until 7 or 8pm, all for a payment of less than 1/- per barrel. Surprisingly, over a six-month season, their pay was equivalent to, or better than, the annual earnings for a farm worker of that time. Any spare time was spent knitting, walking or going to the shows at the *Hippodrome*.

Curers were responsible for booking the visiting teams in advance, paying each girl a 10/- sign-on fee [*arles*] and for their travel (30/- return by train in the early 1900s, including their wooden trunk [*kist*] full of belongings). Curers also provided a subsistence allowance for each girl of a few shillings per week. Lodgings would be found with local families who looked forward to the annual extra income from letting their rooms, and many friendships developed, with girls returning for years to the same household – some marrying into local families. Their work clothing was normally old, cast-off items, covered by an oilskin skirt, and heavy leather boots (replaced by rubber boots post-WWI) as the workplace would be a sea of mud. Due to the condition of the clothing, some landladies in Yarmouth put up brown paper or oilcloth to protect the walls – anticipating their rooms needed to be fresh the following summer for holiday lets. Oilskins and boots were removed and stored in the yard. The cold outdoor climate and rock salt, along with the wet fish, was very hard on their hands and gutters used cloth wrappings to protect their fingers. Even so, the number having to attend the dedicated local first-aid dressing stations and rest houses was very high.

The herring seasons went through good and bad times over the years, sometimes experiencing a glut, where very heavy catches would have to be dumped back at sea or sent for fertilizer on the farms, as there was no market for herrings either cured or fresh. In 1939 war disrupted the trade and by the 1950s traditional voyages gradually came to an end, falling catch rates making them unprofitable. Machinery had been invented to gut the fish, removing the need for the girls' expertise, and cheap diesel fuel allowed boats to make extended voyages. The bonanza was over!

25 October 2012

“Great Yarmouth Gaol – 1835 to 1877”

Chris Wright

Chris explained that his interest in the history of the Gaol began many years ago when he selected it for his college thesis. Up to the 13th century, when the town was awarded its first Charter, the building was being used as a toll office for collecting dues from markets and local traders. The award brought changes that allowed its conversion for several different uses over the centuries including a courthouse and a temporary gaol, originally with cells below ground level. Early prisons were almost unregulated as to number and type of prisoners, occasionally with mixed sexes recorded – juveniles shared the fate of adults. The division of cells into smaller units housing one or two was far off in the future. Most of the inmates were held for quite short periods (from a day-or-two up to a month if their offences were minor) and the turnover was high. It was not until the early 1800s and the gradual spread of police across this country that a formal prison system was suggested. At this time the population of Great Yarmouth was expanding rapidly – rising from 14,845 (in 1801) to 33,804 (in 1871). Around 1835 in Yarmouth a small number of policemen began to take over from the watch (an earlier body of men who had been employed to keep the general population in order) and from then, the ‘Tolhouse’ gaol also served as the town's police station. Adjoining buildings had been taken in at some stage and a contained exercise yard made to the rear. Initially the conditions were very basic and cramped, with poor ventilation, primitive sanitation, and light supplied by tapers or candles. The number of bodies confined together no doubt contributed most of the heat. Dividing walls were at most nine inches thick, giving poor sound insulation, and it

would have been very noisy, with the inmates finding it difficult to get any rest. Food must have been of very poor quality, and minimum quantity, but even so this was probably preferred to the pre-1833 system where prisoners had to pay for their board and any available extras. Every inmate had to wash, probably once per month, and if required be fumigated. A special room was provided for these last two activities.

The staff at the gaol varied in number but there was always a keeper (probably paid £100 per annum) with his wife who invariably was the matron, a turnkey (perhaps with an assistant), a taskmaster and a cook/barber. After 1844 there would also have been a surgeon on call, and a chaplain (both residing locally). Temporary posts would include a nurse and deputy keeper for busy periods. The keeper would also manage all the prison records and order books.

Prison regulations and standards covering treatment, diet and living conditions etc. had been set out in an 1823 Act but it seems were widely ignored by local governors and staff. Inspectors appointed in 1835 travelled the country's gaols and in Yarmouth regularly reported infringements over a number of years. Punishments for inmates (those on remand had an easier time) varied from gaol to gaol and in Yarmouth they included handcuffs, irons, straightjackets, flogging, restrictions on food, plus additional labour including oakum picking (and for those caught trying to escape, an extension of sentence). The tread-wheel was installed in the yard in 1847 and did serve as a deterrent, as numbers of prisoners fell somewhat. Another penalty was transportation; early on to America, but for later convicts it was Australia from where it was more difficult to get home after release. Some 79 from Yarmouth went there, including 7 women, often sent first to prison ships (hulks) or to a government prison near London while awaiting passage.

Separate classifications brought in for prisoners (in 1850) allowed a range of living conditions, e.g. debtors were kept separate – they could order and prepare their own food, were excused labour, wore their own clothes and could receive visitors. Crimes of the day included horse-stealing, larceny, deserting a ship, vagrancy and (for apprentices) disobedience to their master. Few juveniles were convicted at that time, and many of the crimes were attributed to individuals frequenting low class pubs in the town to indulge in strong drink and the temptations of the flesh.

Murderers were tried at Norwich assizes and, if convicted, were hanged at the castle. The insane usually went to St Andrews mental institution at Norwich, while treatable offenders might be transferred to a reformatory at Buxton, Norfolk, believed run by the Sewell family. A remarkable local woman named Sarah Martin worked as an instructor in Yarmouth gaol and was an early social reformer. She lived nearby and visited frequently, helping the inmates in many ways, encouraging them to take up useful crafts like sewing and basket making. She also collected donations for the destitute or for those who could not work through disablement or illness – and kept records detailing all of her activities. When she died, after her years of dedication to the prisoners, she was buried at nearby Caister.

From 1875 prisoners went to Norwich. Yarmouth gaol remained a police station and remand centre, closing in 1877. The new Library now covers the site of the old prison yard and cells and the Tolhouse building houses a museum.

8 November 2012

“In the Footsteps of the Famous”

Paul Scriven

Paul brought a different topic on this occasion by describing a large selection of Stately Homes, gardens and buildings that he and his wife had visited – all illustrated by his own slides. He began with an outline of how the interest of much of the public was aroused, as early as the 1700s, simply by their being excluded from the majority of the country's grand estates and homes. This led to irritation on the part of the owners when passers-by stared at them through gates, over walls and fences, and later, from the tops of carriages and buses when roads encroached on their residences. Surprisingly, had the public been aware, access to parts of some estates could have been simply achieved by a quiet word, and a modest donation, to the housekeeper or butler, usually when the owners were out, or away on holiday. Starting in the 17th century, a great many of these estates and gardens were replanned by famous landscape gardeners, such as William Kent (renowned for Stowe) and Lancelot Capability Brown (responsible for developing Blenheim, Chatsworth and Kew Gardens amongst others). These early experts used plants and trees secured by several explorers and adventurers of the time on their travels around the world, and brought back to England to enhance and add new colour, style and variety to the gardens of the rich. In addition, and at enormous expense, ensued the most adventurous and complete reworking of the landscape ever seen, with rivers moved, hills remodelled, avenues and arboretums created around the newly extended and improved houses.

A great number of estates have historically been developed and maintained by titled families. Those titles would be either inherited, or else granted by royalty or government in recognition of important, sometimes philanthropic, actions by those in business; or perhaps, having outstanding roles in the armed forces. Economic circumstances have decided the success or failure of many important families without inherited titles, and also dictated the life-style of many with titled ancestry. The Marquis of Bath made a decisive step forward in 1966 when opening Longleat as a safari park. The concept of ‘making the estate pay’, was soon adopted by a wide

range of entrepreneurial owners across the UK, and has brought about a very keen following among members of the public, who carefully plan to visit those that offer, usually seasonal, open days to paying visitors. Paul showed over forty such examples using his slides. He gave details from his copious notes about those who had created and lived in them across the generations and their families. These interesting characters included royalty, politicians, poets, actors, writers, artists, musicians, painters and naturalists, not to mention famous explorers, and the promoters of the Industrial Age.

22 November 2012 “Visit to Lowestoft Cine & Camcorder Club”

The Cine Club welcomed us for another visit and put on a splendid variety of their work in both film and video formats for our final meeting in 2012. They got the evening off to a lively start with their entertaining dance version of Robin Hood, set to well-known musical scores. The evening's programme was then introduced, continuing with a very appropriate film recording a Chediston family's archaeological dig. Two young girls with a very keen interest prepared the site in their grandfather's garden, one digging and one recording any finds, while grandad filmed their efforts. After a very enjoyable dig they showed a variety of small artefacts (none of any great age) but concluded that on this occasion, the answer did not 'Lie in the soil'. Next was portrayed a visit to the Orford Ness National Trust site. This heavily vegetated coastal area, only accessible by boat, also contains buildings once used in secret activities, carried out during two World wars, to test and develop military weapons and equipment, including atomic material. In recent years, the area has been transformed into a perfect wetland haven for water birds and plants.

Then came the Cine club's unique film covering the progress of the Olympic torch through Lowestoft. They seized this once-in-a lifetime opportunity to permanently record and interview those sharing the honour of carrying the torch, in turn, as it progressed on a fine and sunny day from the northern town boundary through town and via Ness Point to the south side of the bridge. Here it remained for a short break before the motor cavalcade travelled on south with it to Wrentham. Another side of the local weather came next with beautifully captured scenes of snow gently falling in Corton Woods. The light and atmosphere were outstanding and given scale by the characters included in the latter stages of filming. Keeping to the theme of nature there came an award-winning film entitled 'Goodbye Benacre Broad'. Locals will know the encroaching sea has long threatened to break down the slim shingle bank protecting the freshwater broad near Covehithe. Cine club members attended during a period of devastatingly high tides in 2011, when the inevitable happened. They were able to capture the moment when the sea topped the bank and salt water cascaded into the fresh water inside. As the tide receded the bank gave way and the resulting outflow scoured the entrance, emptying the broad and exposing the mud and reed covered bottom and, presumably, washing away any fish that had lived there. The Club earned the three-star, highest award for their filming coup.

Prior to the break came three very amusing shorts, featuring members well known for their dry sense of humour. The evening then resumed with a visit to 'Disneyland', shot in 1982 by Jim Cheeseman on Super 8 film and now cleverly converted to DVD format. It gave a fun-packed and comprehensive view of the theme park in those days where, astonishingly, there was hardly a fat person to be seen. How things have changed in the 30 years of fast food that have followed. More time differences were to be demonstrated in 'Changing Horsepower', where the passage of time on the farm was demonstrated by three sequential films of ploughing with horses, simple tractors, and finally, today's computer-controlled, massively powerful, modern counterparts gobbling up the fields. Keeping to the past, came a film of the 'Village that time forgot' showing Kersey in south Suffolk. Here the many thatched and timbered buildings have been so well preserved, viewers could easily imagine themselves transported back 300 years. It is a disappointment when a modern car is seen. Our members then enjoyed another humorous short 'Feeling my Age', leaving them laughing, and rounding off another extremely good presentation by the Cine & Camcorder team.

St Matthews Church

Ron Ashman

Earlier this year the Society was given a red leather bound book that had been presented to the Rev Hedges on his departure from Kirkley in 1906. This was in recognition for his seven years of faithful service to the community of St Matthews Church in Kirkley. This book also contains the names of all those who contributed to the gift, (or Purse of Gold as it is referred to in the book), of £100, a considerable sum in 1906.

The book is now on loan from the Lowestoft Archaeological & Local History Society to the Lowestoft Branch of the Suffolk Record Office, so anyone can view it there.

This book was given to the Society by Evelyn Varrell who is the granddaughter of the Rev Hedges.



Fig 1

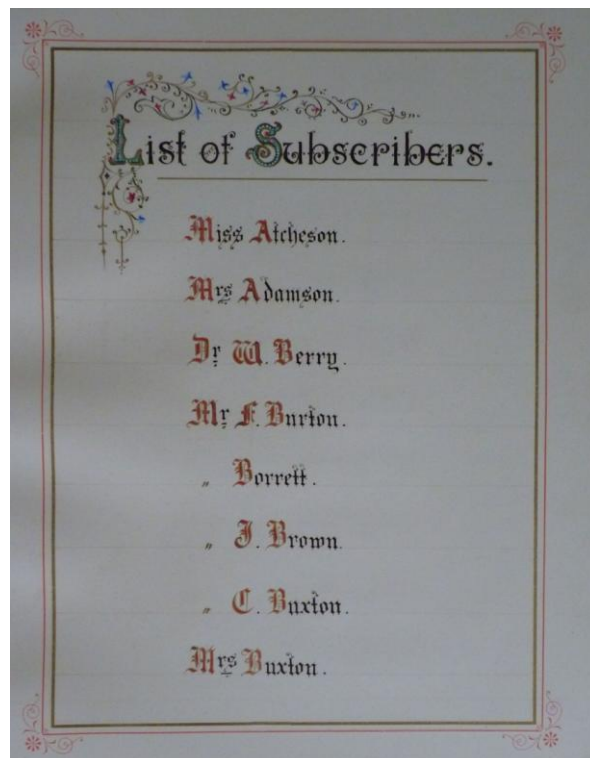


Fig 2

In Fig 1 is shown a reproduction of the first page which gives detail of the presentation. On this is a drawing of the church with another depicting the interior.

The remaining twenty one pages contained the names of the 210 people who had contributed to this gift, the first of which is seen in Fig 2.

The building of St Matthews Church was completed in 1899 in what was described as a poor and populous area of Kirkley, as a mission church of St Peter's, Kirkley. The foundation stone having been laid by Edward Kerrison Harvey on 6 October 1898.

In 1887, Edward Kerrison Harvey had funded a new south porch for St Peter's church, dedicated to the memory of his wife. At the same time a screen with figures and a seven and a half foot high cross were also erected in her memory.



In 1896 this screen was replaced with an iron screen, the rood screen being re-erected in 1899 in the St Matthews Mission church.

In 1896 this screen was replaced with an iron screen, the rood screen being re-erected in 1899 in the St Matthews Mission church.

Fig 3 St Matthews Church

The cost to build St Matthews was reported to be upwards of £1,500. It was a half timbered building that could accommodate 500 people.

By the early 1930's the building was being used as a Dance Hall and for a number of years by the Borough of Lowestoft as a School Clinic and Maternity & Child Welfare Centre. In the Kelly's Directories of the time it was still listed as a Place of Worship although it was not recorded for which religious group. It is known that at some period it was used by the Brethren as a place of worship.

The church building in 1938 became known as Colville Hall, in Clifton Road. The reason for this name was that the road up to that time was known as Colville Road.

The church was demolished in 2007 by Sutton Services. During the demolition a time capsule in the shape of a small glass bottle was discovered which contained a certificate commemorating the laying of the foundation stone; a page from the Lowestoft Journal and Yarmouth and County Record from 1st October 1898; a page from the Lowestoft Standard and East Suffolk Conservative Courier of the same date.

The Rev Canon Percy Douglass Hedges was born near Winchester on 16 September 1869.

Having studied at Cambridge University, he gained a B.A in 1893 and an M.A in 1899.

In 1893 he was ordained at St Albans and the following year became a Priest.

He served as a Curate at St Michael and All Angels, Walthamstow, Essex from 1893 until 1896.

On 13 June 1895 at St Paul's, Cambridge, he had married Evelyn Marion Owen, and raised a family of a son and two daughters. Both daughters were to marry their father's curates.

From Walthamstow he became a Curate at St Margaret's, Lee, Kent from 1896 until 1899, when he became a Curate at St Peter's in Kirkley.

On leaving Kirkley in 1906 he took up the post of Vicar of Christ Church, Clapham, Surrey, until 1944. He was also the Hon Canon of Southwark Cathedral and Rural Dean of Clapham between 1935 and 1944.

Rev Hedges final days were spent in The Hostel of God, Lindfield, Sussex where he passed away on 30 August 1944. His widow, Evelyn, died in 1957.

Note:-

My thanks to Ivan Bunn for the picture of St Matthews Church.

References:-

Details of Rev Hedges, from Evelyn Varrell.

Annual Report 15, St Peter's Church, Kirkley by E Marley

Annual Report 10, Survey of Lowestoft Churches by Jean Julings

While on the subject of churches, Ron also researched the South Lowestoft Methodist Church and published the article below in the Newsletter during 2012. Ed.

We have been meeting in Hall for many years and I thought it would be an idea to find out a little more about the building and the people who worship there. The foundation stone of this church was laid on 7 April 1962, so it is now 50 years old. This was the first Methodist Church built in Lowestoft after the Second World War, and was to replace the Lorne Park Road Church. More than 100 people attended the service and were welcomed by the minister of the Lorne Park Road Church, the Rev E Ronald Kemp. The stone laying and dedication was carried out by the chairman of the Methodist East Anglia District, the Rev Hubert J Morton. Following this ceremony, subscription bricks were laid by many supporters, the first of these being the Mayor of Lowestoft, Mr Frank Jones, followed by many local dignitaries and Church ministers. Earlier in the day some children who had subscribed towards the building were also invited to lay a brick. The site had been purchased in 1956 for about £4,000 and the building cost £26,000.

The Methodist religion came into being in England in the 18th century as a result of the Christian ministry of two brothers, the Rev's John and Charles Wesley. John travelled around this country, preaching to all who wished to listen, whilst Charles was a poet and writer of many of the hymns used by the Methodist Church. John and Charles had studied at Oxford University and, with some fellow students, were methodical about their lives as Christians. Together they said their prayers and

involved themselves in helping others with precise organisation and careful use of time. Some other Oxford students derided their diligent way of life, calling them 'Methodicals' or 'Methodists'. John Wesley took the attempted mockery and turned it into a title of honour.

In May 1968, the *Lowestoft Journal* carried a report that closed-circuit television was to be used for the first time in a Lowestoft Civic Service. A camera and two receivers were to be set up at the South Lowestoft Methodist Church when the Mayor of Lowestoft, Mr G.G Davy, with some other members of the Corporation and a large congregation were expected to attend the annual Mayor's Sunday Service. The Rev David Caink, the minister, realised that the church could not accommodate all of those wishing to attend, so he arranged for the overflow congregation to be seated in the adjacent church hall. T.V. Manufacturing (a Pye company, who manufactured televisions, radios and audio equipment in Oulton Broad from 1951 until 1981) agreed to loan an industrial television camera and two 25-inch television receivers for the duration of the service.

The Lowestoft Museum

Ray Collins

The visitor numbers this year showed a drop on last year despite having a longer season by two weeks. This can mainly be attributed to poor weather early on and in the final weeks with much rain and wind. Visitors for the year were 8793, a drop of 8½%, but donations only decreased slightly. The shop income was down by 15%. Sunday is still our best day for attendance but is unfortunately the most difficult to cover for Stewards.

Accreditation

The museum gained accreditation to the national standard through MLA in 2009 and shortly after this the verification was taken over by the Arts Council. This year we were up for review by a more rigorous process with the application being made on online. After certain improvements to our procedures and methods we gained full accreditation, much due to the help of our Museum Mentor (previously Advisor) Lyn Gash.

Building

With the work done over the last few years both inside and out the environment inside the museum is quite good. The cellar did flood early this winter because of the amount of rain but its effect has been mitigated by shutting the door to block off the cellar from the rest of the building when we are shut. During the summer much work was done on improving the shelving and hence our storage is much better and has made extra room.

Displays

Our fishing display in the hallway is being refurbished, also a display to celebrate the centenary of Benjamin Britten's birth is being set up in the Foyer with the help of the Red House, Aldeburgh.

Cataloguing

To gain accreditation we have had to make proper Accession Registers for our collection as this has not been continued since the early 1990s. This was achieved by compiling the necessary records from MODES (our database), printing onto archivable paper and having the sheets bound into book. In future all new acquisitions will have to be handwritten into a special register to maintain the records.

We now have about half the records in our database properly catalogued, this leaves mainly stored items to be catalogued and will take at least a year.

Visitor Initiatives

Our visits by schools continues to grow and we have had more enquires, these being mainly for the younger children who like to see the toys. We are also due to have older children in who are doing a Living History project and will use the museum as a resource,

The Coming Year

The main challenge is to increase our visit numbers and to have sufficient Stewards to open every day.

The Lowestoft Scene 2012

Keith Davies

11 June Harbour Wall Falls.

An investigation is under way in Lowestoft Harbour after a large section of the north wall fell into Lake Lothing. Police were called about 8 pm on Sunday after the collapse of the 700 metre stretch of the wall off Commercial Road. There was no damage to any buildings and the area was fenced off. Investigations are taking place as to the cause and suitable methods of repair.

22 June Morlings Music Shop To Close.

The current owner Richard Morling 75, the grandson of its founder is calling time on the business because of financial pressures, while celebrating its 120th anniversary.

Morlings was founded by Ernest Morling an insurance agent in 1892, and its first shop was described as a music warehouse, was in Old Nelson Street, Lowestoft. In 1903 the business was relocated to London Road North and in the 1934 its main shop was at No 149 while 149 next door was the piano showroom. In 1941 Morlings shops were badly damaged in a German bombing raid, and the business was relocated across the road, which was also bombed and they moved to 106 London Road North. But in 1942 Ernest, 3 staff and 3 customers were killed in a raid in which 70 people lost their lives. The business was continued by Mr Morling's daughters, as his son, Hugh Morling died in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. In 1981 another disaster struck, when a massive fire ripped through the store in London Road North but it was able to re-open for business.

In 2006 it was decided to move to cheaper premises in south Lowestoft, which is to be closed, following the fate of the Beccles shop, which was in operation from 1926 to 2007.

29 July Excelsior Trust

Lowestoft fishing smack Excelsior has been given two grants worth £19000 to help to introduce more people to the wonders of sailing at sea. The money will be used to help refurbish the vessel for next year's sailing programme. The Trustees are in discussion with the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and schools keen to use Excelsior for youth development. The Excelsior was built in 1921 and the Trust founded in 1982 to safeguard the vessels future. The Princess Royal in 1988, commissioned Excelsior as a sail training ship.

1 September First Free School

The first free school in the area will open in 4 days time at its temporary site in Carlton Colville, where it will be based for 2 years before moving to Beccles where it will take over what was Worlingham Middle School in 2014. The former Carlton Colville Primary School will have an expected intake of 68 pupils. The Beccles Free School as it is to be called secured approval from the government despite fierce opposition - from the local MP, the Chairman of the County Council, parents and teachers. Tax payers money and pupils will be diverted from schools which are trying to cope with a massive and expensive reorganisation.

Free Schools are new schools set up groups such as parents, teachers, charities, and businesses: 50 are due to open this September in England.

The school opened on 5 September with 58 pupils and 14 teachers - 30 fewer pupils than projected.

14 September Marina Theatre Refurbishment

The curtain will go up tonight on the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, when the new look Marina Theatre will be unveiled for the first time. The main auditorium has been completely refurbished as part of a £250000 investment, the first for nearly 25 years. In addition to new carpets, and improved state of the seating as used in Lotus cars, major improvements have been made to the Marina's technical areas. A new ground floor cafe and box office will also be opened, with a digital 3D cinema to be unveiled in the autumn. Many beautiful features have been revealed which had been hidden by

previous alterations - see if you can spot them.

12 October Repair of Harbour Walls

These are now ongoing, but no explanation of the cause of the collapse has been forthcoming from Associated British Ports, and diggers are now excavating sections of the south wall opposite the site of the original collapse. The day to day operation of the port is still unaffected.

19 October Sports Centre Cash Crisis

Less than a year after it reopened after an £8m refurbishment, the centre is to receive £300,000 of public cash to ease cash flow problems. The chief executive of the Sentinel Leisure Trust and 7 members of the trust's board have resigned. Mr Wilson Sutter a former manager of Waveney Norse is the new chairman of the board of trustees. Mr Gallagher a former manager of the centre is now head customer services in Waveney, says the centre was a little bit behind the curve. Existing memberships would become obsolete, and revised membership options sent out soon!

Bus and Rail News

Bus passengers in Waveney will later this year benefit from the introduction of 13 gas powered single-decker buses in Lowestoft, Yarmouth, and Norwich. The bus was trialled on 3 different routes with excellent feedback from drivers and passengers by Anglian Bus. It will be the first operator in the U.K. to operate this type of bus.

From December 10 an hourly train service is due to start on the Line between Ipswich and Lowestoft, after the completion of the passing loop at Beccles.

17 November Crown Street Hall Refurbishment Campaign.

An historic Lowestoft hall was the setting for a special inaugural fundraiser at the weekend to save and restore the 200 year old building one of the country's first purpose built Fisher Theatres - The Bungay Fisher Theatre being still a thriving centre for entertainment in the town.

After opening as a theatre in 1812 the building has served as the town's assembly rooms, a mission hall, community hall, Government offices, a craft centre for Lowestoft College, and the home of Waveney Folk Club.

The Hall, a Grade two listed building is on a "at risk" list compiled by the East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust, which requires an estimated £300,000 worth of repairs and modernisation work.

The Crown Street Hall Committee linked with Sunrise Books, Panda Books, and Blue Vinyl to organise the event, which saw thousands of paperbacks, hardbacks and records on sale and for auction, for which there was an excellent turn out.