

BLYTHBURGH

FOCUS

SERVING BLYTHBURGH,
BULCAMP AND HINTON



Issue No 81

<http://blythburgh.onesuffolk.net>

June/July 2025

Blythburgh Day 2025 Change of Venue

Save the date! Blythburgh Day, our version of a village fete, will be held on **Sunday 20 July from 12-5pm and admission is free.** This year, it will take place in the garden of **Mill Farm, Dunwich Road IP19 9LT.** There'll be free food (we'll be issuing a voucher!), tea, coffee, cakes, and a pay bar. There is also be music, all-age games with prizes, a raffle and a fun dog show. It's huge fun for all the family, and a chance to socialise with your neighbours with a marvellous view over the estuary.

We'll be sending round a flier door-to-door nearer the date which will include your free food voucher. All parishioners are welcome!



Issue 81

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HOW HEALTHY IS THE BLYTH?

For the past two years the Wilder Wenhaston River team has been finding depressingly high concentrations of the 'nutrient pollutants' phosphate and nitrate in the Blyth. For example, the average nitrate concentration in England's rivers is 5.5mg/L and in the Blyth (Feb-Aug 2024) it was 18.5 mg/L. This, and high concentrations of bacteria – notably E. coli – come predominantly from the sewage treatment out-falls at Halesworth and Wenhaston.

To examine effects on Blyth wildlife, we set up groups to survey birds, mammals, plants and river invertebrates. Although it's early days, there



are strong signs that the range of river invertebrates (insects, worms etc) are characteristic of polluted fresh water. Plant life also reflects pollution, for example duckweed and 'sewage fungus', and heavy growth of Himalayan Balsam which, although pretty, is invasive, and chokes growth of native species and increases bank erosion. It is too early to draw conclusions about the mammal populations (otter and water-vole), and bird life, but continued monitoring should enable us to track changes – hopefully improvements!

Any good news? Firstly, Wilder Wenhaston has brought these pollution problems to the public eye, challenging Anglian Water on many specific aspects of our local waste treatment, and informing politicians about the situation. Pressure from us meant Anglian Water finally commissioned a

phosphate removal plant at Halesworth and is installing one at Wenhasston. This has reduced phosphate levels in the Blyth with an almost immediate reduction in the coverage of duckweed. Sadly, this leaves nitrate pollution – much harder and more expensive to remove.

Untreated sewage ‘spillages’ into our rivers have been headline news nationally, and sadly the Blyth is no exception. 2023 saw the largest number of ‘spills’ on record, and 2024 exceeded even this. Water companies are licensed to ‘spill’ only in ‘extreme conditions’ (good luck if you try to find a definition of that!). Last October 1st and 2nd saw persistent rain locally (34mm and 11mm) – heavy, but not biblical – and Halesworth and Beccles poured untreated sewage into the Blyth and Waveney for 12 hours plus. This shows that the treatment works do not have the capacity to handle the volume of sewage and run-off that is required. Expansion of new housing around Halesworth together with more frequent, heavier rainfall accompanying climate change will just exacerbate the problem.

In January we published a report on our findings and this can be found on our website <https://wenhasstonmells-pc.gov.uk/assets/Wilder-Wenhasston/Reports/Wilder-Wenhasston-River-Group/VWRG-Blyth-River-Survey2024.pdf>

We will watch the political to-ing and fro-ing with the water companies with interest, but in the meantime Wilder Wenhasston is working locally to monitor the Blyth and agitate for improvement. Volunteers will be clearing balsam and a small team of surveyors will be carrying out River Fly monitoring. We are also now about to collaborate with the Deben Climate Centre who have secured funding from the local authority to create a Four Rivers Project covering the Deben, Alde/Ore, Blyth and Waveney. The project was launched on 22 May and will fund a project manager with the aim to standardise testing and oversee practical improvements throughout the catchments. In addition, a scientist will be analysing the distribution and genetics of E.coli in these rivers.

Wil Harvey and Alan Miller on behalf of Wilder Wenhasston River Group

IS IT SAFE TO SWIM?

Editor's note

A number of locals and visitors like to swim in the brackish, tidal water of the Blyth off 'The Beach' below the church. We asked Wil and Alan how risky this was. They were unable to give a definitive answer, but will test the water this summer, and we will publish the results in Blythburgh Focus when we get them. In the meantime we urge caution.

E. coli and other enteric (gut) bacteria can and do survive in salt and brackish water. Their survival is reduced by salt and sunlight (especially UV) but is prolonged by nutrients in the water.

*There is a relatively high concentration of E. coli coming downstream towards Blythburgh from the non-tidal Blyth, but we don't know the extent to which this is diluted by incoming tidal water. Nor do we know if there is any additional contamination coming from human or farming sources around Blythburgh. The non-tidal Blyth at Blyford would be deemed **unfit** for swimming, so you should be wary of swimming at Blythburgh until it's proven safe. Watch this space.*



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

It's all very well blaming the water companies for the dire state of our rivers, but the problems begin with all of us

Detergents contain phosphates which promote the growth of algae and toilet cleaners and sink unblockers are all harmful to the environment. Check the ones you use and you're likely to see warning labels such as 'Harmful to aquatic life', 'Avoid release into the environment'. So guess where they go, down the drain, through the sewage works (as they cannot strip out many of the chemicals) and into the river. That includes popular Toilet Duck type products.

However, there are alternatives. Check the internet and there is plenty of choice, for example toilet cleaners from Bio-D, Minimi, Bower Collective, Ecolife and many others. Most sell refills and so reduce plastic waste.

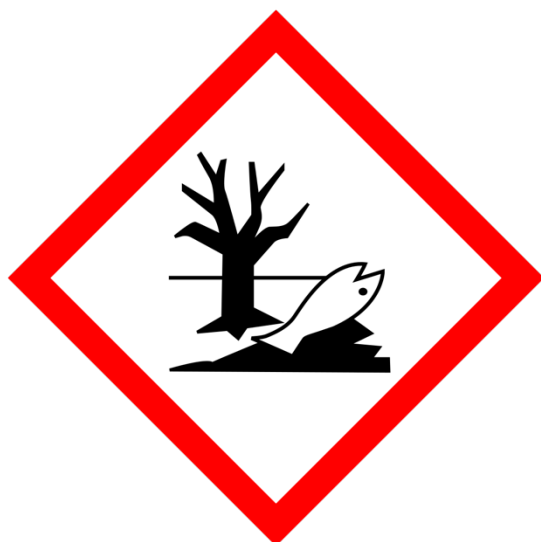
Our pets are another source of pollution. The impact of flea and tick treatments for cats and dogs when they enter the natural water environment. Recent Imperial College research has revealed some

startling facts on the environmental impact of pet parasiticides. Flea and tick treatments for cats and dogs include some potent insecticides mainly imidacloprid (a neonicotinoid) and fipronil. These chemicals are banned for use in agriculture. New data has shown these chemicals are entering our rivers and ponds at quantities that will kill insect larvae and so impact the very bottom of the food chain.

These chemicals are used on a large proportion of the UK's 25 million dogs and cats and for example the treatment for a large dog is enough to kill several million bees. Therefore, dogs swimming in ponds and rivers are a real threat to the wider environment along with the washing of pet bedding and even hand washing is thought to be the main ways these chemicals are entering our aquatic systems.

If you're a pet owner, please talk to your vets or check online as there are alternative treatments available that are much safer and friendlier. Also consider treating only when needed rather than as a precaution.

Locally, Blyth Woods and several local landowners have spent many thousands of pounds restoring ponds for the benefit of wildlife and the environment, so please refrain from letting your pets swim in these waters, we want future generations to still enjoy seeing dragonflies and damselflies dancing above the water surface.



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WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE VILLAGE HALL

"Marvellous – keep on going!" That was the reaction from one happy customer at No Cook Wednesday (NCW) when we carried out a survey at the end of the first three months of offering a two-course lunch at 12.30pm in the Village Hall once a fortnight. People seem to enjoy the food, there is very little left over! But the team were very pleased that virtually everyone thought that "Getting together with other people" was the most important aspect of NCW. That is what we hoped it would be all about. And so, we're going to keep on going!



We started with a grant from East Suffolk District Council which enabled us to buy cooking equipment, and also paid for the electricity and ingredients. That has finished, so we are now charging £5 per head – but under 18s who are still in education eat for free.

We're going to take a break in July but we'll back on **6 August** and will then continue, all being well, for the foreseeable future. During August, we aim to appeal particularly to families with children; those who live here and those who are perhaps on holiday with grandparents. If there is enough demand, we might try to organise some children's activities after the lunch.

Not experienced NCW yet? Come and join us on 11 or 25 June, you'll be sure of a warm welcome! Don't forget, if you don't have transport, we can arrange it. NCW is organised by the Village Hall Management Committee, and so now is the Film Club. We show a film on the **first Friday evening of each month**, anything from the classics of yesteryear to those which have only recently become available on general release.

In past years Film Club has taken a summer break, but this year it's our intention to carry on right through the year. We ask for a small donation of £5 to help defray Village Hall costs – the film licence alone costs nearly £700 a year! We've decided not to provide drinks in the future though you're very welcome to bring your own, and we may still provide suitable refreshments for free from time to time – like the marmalade sandwiches which accompanied *Paddington in Peru*! If you have a favourite film which you'd love to see on the big screen, just let us know by emailing Chris Shone: mrcshone@gmail.com.

Another Village Hall initiative which we're trying to get off the ground is table-top sales. We had a successful one back in February but had to cancel one planned for May because of lack of bookings. Would you be interested in principle in having a stall at a future event if the date suits you? If so, again, please contact Chris Shone.

Blythburgh Village Hall Management Committee

The Blythburgh Latitude Trust is making grants

**The Blythburgh Latitude Trust makes grants
to individual parishioners, families
and organisations to meet specific
needs.**

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the honorary administrator,
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Waller and Tom Smith**

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Finance Advisory Committee: Roderick Orr-Ewing,

Councillors: Matthew Saunders, Jude Blois, Claire Lyth, Harriet Strachan

Clerk: Philip Stone

www.blythburgh.onesuffolk.net

BLYTHBURGH FIELD NOTES

The Blyth Estuary has again been the main area of attraction for migrant birds, with occasional sightings of Spoonbill and Great-crested Grebe while, during the earlier part of the period, bird interest focused mainly around sightings of Short-eared Owl and Peregrine. A pair of Garganey were also recorded, while another Temminck's Stint was reported on the adjoining Tinker's Marsh.

Other waders have included very good numbers of Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwit, Grey Plover and Ruff. Although this latter species was mentioned last time in some detail, more recent research carried out in Holland where 99 males were ringed and tagged with satellite telemetry tracking devices, showed that males visited at least eleven lek breeding sites, staying on average two days, travelling an average of 4,435 kilometres during the breeding period. This obviously increases the chance of mating and spreading the gene pool, with one keen bird travelling 9,000 kilometres. These being a polygamous species, the females carry out all the parental care.

On 11 May a flock of 49 Common Ringed Plover of the tundae sub-species were recorded, these breed in the Arctic Regions and are not easy to separate without good views, but they are slightly smaller, have a darker mantle plumage, paler legs, a smaller bill and a less intense black and white head pattern.

I have never seen the shrub flora, including common Gorse, produce such dense flowers as this year, with many bushes appearing completely yellow. The same with Cherry Plum and even Blackthorn, these two are similar, but the flowers on the plum are larger and whiter, while Blackthorn flowers appear smaller and have a faint grey tinge to them. The Hawthorn 'May' is also prolific this year. There's an old theory that in times of drought shrubs produce more flower and seed, in case they fail to survive, enabling the gene pool to continue, there may be some merit in this.

I Noknowt



The White Hart

LUNCH SPECIAL MENU

Gruyère and Shallots Frittata potato salad, romesco (v)	14
Flat Iron Steak rocket & parmesan salad, chimichurri, fries	18
White Hart Club herb marinated chicken, avocado, tomato bacon, lettuce, mustard mayo, sourdough, salted crisps	14
Prawn & Crayfish Cocktail Roll , pickled shallots, dill, Marie rose sauce, shredded iceberg, salted crisps	13
Katsu Sando breaded chicken, baguette, white cabbage slaw, tonkatsu sauce, curry mayo	14
French Dip roast beef, gruyère, baguette, beef jus, rocket	14
Ploughman's pork pie, honey glazed ham, sausage roll Black Bomber, onion chutney, piccalilli, sourdough, Normandy butter	15

Add fries £2.5

Every effort is made during kitchen preparation to ensure that all of our dishes, including those made of vegetarian ingredients, are not contaminated by allergens; however, we cannot always guarantee this to be the case.

Allergen information is available on request.

**We are pleased that the ever popular NENIE will be
singing for your entertainment at The White Hart on
Sunday 22 June from 6:30 – 8:30**

RONALD BLYTHE HONOURED

The esteemed East Anglian nature writer, Ronald Blyth, author of *Akenfield*, was fond of Blythburgh Church. His memory was honoured (he died in 2023 at the age of 100) at the annual Open Afternoon of The Friends of Holy Trinity Blythburgh on 17th May. Malcolm Doney conducted an open conversation with Ian Collins who wrote Blyth's biography, *Blyth Spirit: The Remarkable Life of Ronald Blyth*. Malcolm's questions were knowledgeable (he had met Blyth and written his obituary for the *Church Times*), and Ian proved a thoughtful and eloquent interviewee. He had known Ronnie (as he was known) for 30-odd years. The mutual sympathy of Malcolm and Ian made for a relaxing and engaging afternoon for a large and generous audience, who also enjoyed our usual tea and cake, with a tour of the church by Meryl Doney.



Malcolm Doney and Ian Collins

The sub-title of the biography, *The Remarkable Life of Ronald Blyth*, might seem surprising, since Ronnie lived a long but seemingly not remarkable life. He had no formal education after the age of fourteen, and he never moved from Suffolk/Essex. What made his life remarkable, as Ian conveyed, was his character and his writing skills, formed and informed by his voracious reading. The character was that of a simple man who was wholly authentic, entirely himself, self-contained but unselfconsciously charming to other people, who responded to that charm.

For a self-taught man, Ronnie was remarkable in writing nearly 40 books (from 1960 to 2022) and editing others (for Penguin Classics). Fame came early with the seminal book, *Akenfield* (1969), semi-fictional interviews charting the post-war decline of Suffolk agriculture. Interspersed by literary and poetic references, he wrote on nature, rural life, and people of all sorts, from artists to farm labourers.

One of his late books was *The Time by the Sea*, in which he recalled his years at Aldeburgh in the 1950s where he was a friend of Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears, and Imogen Holst, among others. In it he wrote of being sent in 1956 to the vicar of Blythburgh to ask permission to hold an Aldeburgh Festival concert in the church, a permission granted in amusing circumstances and which led to Ronnie often visiting Holy Trinity: 'I

would cycle there and take up a kind of residency'. It was therefore a privilege to honour Ronnie in our own church, which had been one of his 'dream-places'.

Sue Powell, Chair of the Friends of Holy Trinity, Blythburgh

MONTHLY MINI-MARKET



Val, Meryl and Joe

Forget the Royal Windsor Horse Show, the Henley Royal Regatta and RHS Chelsea Flower Show - the place to be seen is at the monthly mini-markets in the church.

The 2025 season of mini-markets is now well underway. Held on the **last Friday of every month through until October**, the markets run from 10:30-noon. Come and spend some money with our loyal stallholders and when you have finished your buying spree you can relax with tea, coffee and homemade cakes, and enjoy some stimulating conversation with neighbours and friends – putting the world to rights.

Blythburgh High Society Correspondent

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SEASONAL TIPS FOR YOUR GARDEN

Your flower garden

June and July are often described as the height of the flowering season in the garden when long hours of sunlight fuel plants to grow rapidly. The flower garden is awash with some of my favourite flowers, colours and textures and their scents fill the warm air.

Roses are at their best in June and July, but once the first flush of flowers is over deadheading is an essential job to do to encourage a re-flowering later in the season. It's essential to continue to tie in climbing roses to their supports at this time of year as they grow upwards at an alarming rate. Clematis and Sweet Peas also need tying in as they grow upwards and combine together to give a riot of colour and scent in different parts of the garden



For continued colour through to Autumn, try and fill any gaps with pot-grown late flowerers such as Sedums, Agastache, Achillea, Asters such as Michelmas Daisy, and Japanese Anemones. Dahlias that have been protected and grown on in the greenhouse can now safely be placed outside in their pots or put into the ground. Do protect these and other tender plants from slugs and snails. One effective organic method to keep them at bay is to surround your vulnerable plants with a ring of lawn clippings about an inch deep. Sharp grit or coffee grounds can also be effective.

Your vegetable garden

Peas and all sorts of beans can be safely planted out now that threat of late frosts has passed. They're thirsty plants and will need regular watering to do well. This year has been particularly challenging with the lack of rain in April and May. Another thirsty crop are Courgettes, but I find growing them in pots means you can water and feed more effectively. Feed once a week with a Liquid Seaweed feed and results are usually good. Tomatoes can also be planted now into Growbags or pots, but feed these with a specific Tomato liquid feed. Potatoes sown last month will now need earthing up if planted in the ground or in bags, this excludes the light from reaching the potato tubers and turning them green which is poisonous and makes them inedible.

Herbs do really well at this time of year. Annual herbs can be sown directly where needed or in containers. A mixed herb container near the back door is useful to have and nice to look at. Mint should always be grown in its own pot as it tends to take over everything else, and needs more watering than the Mediterranean herbs. Lemon Verbena is best grown in a pot on its own too, and makes a really refreshing tea for the summer.

Green Fingered Gal

SPECIAL INVITATION TO SEE THE BLYTHBURGH HOARD

The parishioners of Blythburgh are invited to a special viewing of the 41 Iron Age gold coins discovered in Blythburgh and purchased by Halesworth & District Museum. The viewing will take place on **Thursday 10 July at 6.30pm at the Halesworth & District Museum, The Railway Station, Station Road, Halesworth, IP19 8BZ**

The new 22 coins, together with the first find of 19, make a spectacular collection, and may well be a relic of the Boudican revolt. A new display has been created at the Museum, displaying the latest find.



The first find was purchased in 2021 and includes one coin which had never been previously recorded in the UK, and two other coins that each have only one other known example.

Although we have received grant funding from various sources, along with donations from Friends of the Museum and

Supporters, purchase of the coins was only possible by dipping into the Museum's reserves. Further donations would be welcomed to build back the reserve which is vital to ensure the ongoing viability of the Museum.

Another find of coins from the same site is now being assessed and valued at the British Museum. Please email the Museum to let us know you will be coming to this special viewing at office@halesworthmuseum.org.uk.

BLYTHBURGH CHURCH

The big dig

The work to install drainage for the new toilets and galley kitchen was completed ahead of time in the second week of May, additional time had been allowed in case of unexpected discoveries as the excavations crossed the churchyard, but was not needed (ie no ship burial!). The building work inside the church, at the base of the tower, will begin on or around 7 July and be completed in the middle of October. The clappers and pulleys for our bells are now in Dorset to be renovated and will be back in early June to be fitted along with new bell ropes. Meanwhile, the bell frame will be repainted.

Re-glazed window

A window on the south side of the church which is being fitted with clear glass, in memory of Peter and Diana Coghill (who once lived on Daisy Bank) will be completed in June.

Church birthday

Sunday June 15 is Trinity Sunday, and since the church is called Holy Trinity, Blythburgh, this is its 'patronal day' a bit like a birthday. To mark this, the church community will be serving brunch after the **9.30am** service on that day. Everyone is welcome.

Musical connections

The Dunedin Consort are performing in the afternoon of **Saturday 21 June at 3pm**. The concert is entitled *Lamentations*. New and old combine in this special programme with Allan Clayton: stirring Bach, heart-rending Zelenka, and contemporary music by Caroline Shaw and Tom Coult. For details and tickets go to brittenpearsarts.org.

The East Sussex Community Choir is presenting an hour-long concert in Blythburgh for a summer late afternoon on **Saturday 28 June at 5pm**. The programme will include extracts from the Haydn Nelson Mass and Vivaldi Dixit Dominus, Schubert's An die Musik, and a medley from Bernstein's West Side Story, as well as pieces by Osgood, Stopford and Farrant. Entry is FREE.

Coffee & cake

Do join us at Blythburgh Church's ever popular café and mini-market takes place on **Friday 27 June and 25 July from 10.30am to 12pm**.

Animals ahead

Our famed Blessing of the Animals Service will take place on **Sunday 17 August at 11am**.

BLYTHBURGH HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

The growing season is upon us, so a few members ventured up to East Ruston Vicarage for the Plant Fair on 27 April and were very pleased they did! There were many high quality plants for sale together with some restored garden tools, garden ornaments and other quirky stalls of interest.

It was a beautiful day and the entry fee was refunded against entry to the ever wonderful vicarage gardens: absolutely stunning displays of tulips and other planters with colourful displays. The Mediterranean garden was magnificent with an Agave which is about to flower – only the second one to do so in Europe. At least 10 feet high it will be a sight to behold and may well be in flower for their 2nd plant fair on 7th June. A visit is highly recommended.

Our programme continues into June and July with two eagerly anticipated annual events: our Summer Garden Party and Garden Safari.

Looking further ahead, just a reminder that our Annual Summer Show



will take place on **Saturday 9 August**. Val Carse, Chair describes the show as “Blythburgh’s fiercely competitive, but friendly, summer fruit, veg and produce show”. The Show is open to all Blythburgh residents as well as members. It would be lovely if you could take part or maybe just join us to peruse the

entries and enjoy tea, cakes and a chat.

We currently have a healthy 67 members but there is always room for more so please do get in touch (sonia.boggis@btinternet.com) if you would like to join us; membership is still just £5 a year.

Committee for 2025: Val Carse (Chair), Jenny Allen (Treasurer), Sonia Boggis (Secretary), Terry Goss, Sue Ireland-Cutting, Claire Lyth, Rachel Morris, Carol Nichols, Cilla Wilson (President)

Sonia Boggis, Secretary

NORTHERN LIGHTS: NO LONGER A MYTH

Are you surprised how often our media report the possibility of seeing the Northern Lights somewhere in the UK? Just recently, a friend captured a stunning red aurora from her garden in Wenhaston. Sadly, the Northern Lights have always eluded me: long cold nights gazing skyward in the frozen wastes of Iceland and Norway yielded nothing. Time-lapse exposures worked but did the northern lights really dance and shimmer in real-time?

This February, some 250 kilometres inside the Arctic Circle in Finnish Lapland, we stayed beside a massive frozen lake. Yes, there had been mention of the Northern Lights but I had no expectations. We were there to snowshoe, meet a Sami reindeer herder, learn a bit about Sami culture and be taught to handle a team of huskies before heading off with our dogs. Yes, it was just the two of us and five dogs. I remember the key instruction was “don’t let go” even if you tip over because you are their brake. The weather was a balmy -10°C during the day up from -37°C the week before thanks to the polar vortex moving northward. Positively tropical for the time of year!

At night, the frozen lake offered huge sky views with no light pollution except a full moon. Stars and planets shone bright: Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, the constellation of Orion . . . 10pm came and went. The sky started to change. Could it be, could it really be? Streaks of light started appearing. Green flashes. Swirling curtains of green blue light hung across the sky. These morphed into rotating spirals of intense green. They dimmed and then came again with startling intensity as they dance across the vast sky. Around 1am they faded and left a normal night sky. Put simply, the Northern Lights are an interaction of the solar wind and the Earth's magnetic field. but for us they were truly magical and returned night after night.



We thought nothing could impress more than the aurora but we were wrong. One afternoon, around sunset, a mother of pearl cloud appeared.



These rare, high altitude clouds form in the stratosphere in extremely cold conditions typically below -80°C. Composed of tiny ice

crystals they have a shimmering, iridescent quality like the shells of some molluscs. Much rarer than the aurora, these clouds even brought the locals out. Life was good. And had just got even better.

Sonia Boggis

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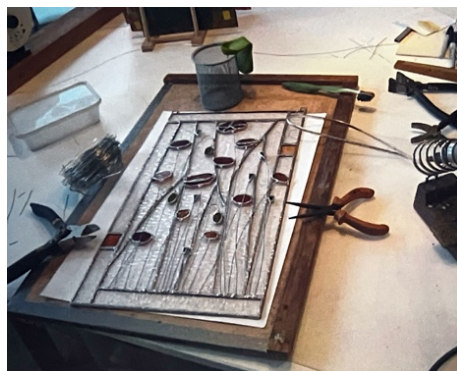
Women's Land Army - Our meeting on Thursday 3 April was well attended by 21 people to listen to Nicky Reynolds give a very interesting talk about the Suffolk Women's Land Army. Supported by photographs of Land Army Women in their uniform, their documents, and their various medals on the village hall screen, her



informed talk was very well received. A lesser known fact was that the Women's Land Army was started during the First World War – a revelation to some. A Q&A session followed where some members revealed their connection to Land Army girls. On leaving, Nicky did mention that she is working on a talk relating to Suffragette Women - something we could well be interested in next year.

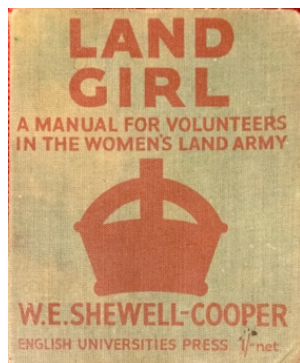
Glass artist Naomi Brangwyn – We hosted a fascinating presentation in May by Naomi Brangwyn. Not to be confused with heavier leaded stained

glass, Naomi demonstrated how she cuts, shapes, smooths and positions coloured glass to create delicate artwork inspired by nature - flowers, reeds, butterflies, trees, fields and seashore. Her finished pieces make beautiful wall hangings. She will be showing her work in the upcoming Aldeburgh Art Trail. Many thanks to Chris Shone for skillfully projecting the images.



Next Events – Our next event is a golf-taster followed by a meal at the Southwold Golf Club on 5 June. We have 11 people interested so far – contact me (marygundry@tiscali.co.uk) if you are interested but have not yet booked. Plans for the Boat trip on the Broads are yet to be confirmed.

Mary Gundry
Secretary



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WILDWATCH

With the breeding season currently in full swing, many birds have already fledged a first brood, and other species will soon join the young blackbirds in my garden.

Unlike humans, who construct a permanent 'nest' – or engage an expert like Nick Haward to design and build it for them, birds only build for a single season's procreation. Having established a territory they can defend, and found a



suitable site safely hidden from predators, they then construct their cradle.

Earlier in April while at my desk, my attention was caught by movement outside my bay window. I turned to see a long-tailed tit gathering spider silk from under the eaves.

Long-tailed tits and wrens (among our smallest birds) build a round dome-shaped, almost spherical nest, using a variety of materials. These include feathers, insect silk and moss. Larger birds need a more robust and open structure. Blackbirds build an open cup from dried grass, thin twigs and leaves. Corvids need even larger and therefore stronger materials and use stouter sticks and line their nest with softer stuff such as mammal hair.

Those of ground-nesting birds, in contrast, are mere scrapes, relying on their eggs' camouflage as protection.

But how does a bird, with a beak and, at best, two feet manage to build what are quite complicated structures? The answer is that evolution has, over time, managed to imbue birds with a nesting instinct, honed and inherited through tens of thousands of generations.

House martins and swallows construct mud nests interwoven with grass and feathers. They've been doing this long before the Romans invented reinforced concrete. The sedge and reed warblers use reeds as supports

for their cupped nests, weaving grass between the stems for additional strength.

But our native birds' ingenuity is matched, if not excelled by others around the world. In South America, the oven bird builds a nest of mud the size of a football on a fence post, so well reinforced it takes a lot of effort to break into it. Furthermore, the interior has a spiral entrance to protect the egg-chamber. In Asia, the tailor bird stitches leaves together with silk and lines the cup with moss. The leaves stay green, acting as a perfect camouflage.

For thousands of years, humans have been capable of constructing impressive edifices that may last for generations. One wonders what birds would achieve if they chose to build for eternity.

Paul Lacey



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DAISY BANK CXXI

I don't get out much, but friends tell me that the area of countryside around Leiston and Sizewell has been devastated by the felling of trees and clearing of the countryside in honour of the new Sizewell C power station. I remember Sizewell B going up, and the traffic and congestion that Blythburgh had to put up with then. And, on a rare trip to the petrol station at Darsham I have noticed similar happenings in that area so that enormous car parks can be built for a 'park and ride' facility for workers to be bussed into the site.

I may have written previously about this, but it's probably worth repeating it in the context of the above change. Some years ago, my partner B having a hankering to move to Walberswick, we were quite far in negotiating for a mock-Tudor thatched house that at some time in its life been owned by the writer Neville Shute's wife. It all seemed so right, as Shute is my favourite author. It had, according to the surveyor, one of the best views of the sea on the Suffolk coast. Eventually, the lady selling the house backed out. Oh, what a tragedy we avoided there!

The adjacent field to the house I was convinced would never be built on as the wealthy and famous folk of Walberswick would never allow such a thing to happen. I believe it's currently owned by the film star Keira Knightly. Now it appears that subsea cables from a Dutch offshore windfarm will end up in that same field with a large electrical substation taking centre stage. Access roads and a large construction site will follow. And the whole thing, I believe, is on a compulsory purchase order basis. In other words, it's going to happen no matter what.

Walberswick is a unique part of this coast and its fate is now sealed so that we, the people who actually live here, can provide a conduit for a power source that will only benefit the people living in what is euphemistically called the 'home counties'. Had I stayed there all those years ago in Surrey where my parents lived, I would be one of the beneficiaries and Walberswick and its surrounding area including Blythburgh would have been an unknown part of the country that I cared less about. That, unfortunately, is the way of the world. Hopefully, I will have taken up residence in Blythburgh churchyard before all this happens. Not a world that I want to live or take part in!

Red is still living in my office during the night and then disappears for a couple of days. Once again, I'm appealing for information about him. It could be that he is feral, but who knows.

Paul Bennett

VILLAGER OF THE YEAR

Here's your chance to vote for the person you think has contributed most to village life. A candidate can be anyone who lives in the parish, unless they are a serving member of the Parish Council.

Please use the form below to nominate the person who gets your vote. Put the completed form in a sealed envelope, marked 'Villager of the Year' and posting it through the letter box of Roderick Orr-Ewing, Chair of the Parish Council, at Mill End Dunwich Road, Blythburgh, or else you can send an email nominating your candidate, together with your reasons, to roderick@millend6.plus.com or blythburgh.pc@gmail.com. The closing date for nominations is Saturday 12 July.

The winner receives £50 with his or her name on the honours board in the Village Hall. She or he will be announced at Blythburgh Day on Sunday 20 July.

VILLAGER OF THE YEAR

Name:

Proposer/s:.....

Reasons for nomination:

.....
