

BLYTHBURGH

Focus

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BULCAMP AND HINTON



Issue No. 9

<http://blythburgh.onesuffolk.net>

May/June 2013

Raise a glass to celebrate Blythburgh

Everybody in the parish is invited to raise a glass to Blythburgh and its residents at the annual parish meeting in the village hall this Friday, May 17 at 7pm. Wine and light refreshments will be served.

The Parish Council is keen that as many parishioners as possible attend the meeting, which it sees as a party to celebrate all the good things that happen in Blythburgh.

Find out what has happened in the last 12 months. Formalities will be kept to a minimum and you can meet friends and councillors and those who run village groups.

The council hopes that as many people as possible will join them on Friday evening.

At the annual general meeting of the council on Monday evening, David Tytler was re-elected chair; Alan Mackley, vice-chair and chair of the planning advisory group; and John Blakesley, chair of the finance advisory group.

Roderick Orr-Ewing was re-appointed to the financial advisory group with Jim Boggis, the parish clerk, as Responsible Officer. Cliff Waller and Sonia Boggis were re-appointed to the planning advisory group. Alan De Thabrew and

David Tytler were re-appointed as the council's representatives on the Blythburgh Latitude Trust. Alan Mackley and Debbie Gifkins were appointed as trustees of the village hall management committee.

Celebrating Blythburgh is back on Sunday July 28. The day will start with an open air service in the Priory ruins at 11.00 am. Events are free and will be held throughout the day from 11.30 am to 5.00 pm in the Priory Gardens, thanks to Nick and Susan Haward, in the village hall, with free boat trips on the River Blyth provided by Natural England.

There will be live music, a licensed bar and free barbecue for parishioners, together with a number of other attractions. Full details will be announced in the July issue of the *Blythburgh Focus*.

The BBQ is free to parishioners on presentation of a voucher, which will appear in the next issue of the *Focus*. *Celebrating Blythburgh* is supported by the Blythburgh Latitude Trust and Blythburgh with Bulcamp and Hinton Parish Council.

Everybody is welcome. Please be there.

Collecting tickets for Latitude 2013

All tickets for the 2013 Latitude tickets have now been allocated. Those still requiring children's tickets should go to ticketing@festivalrepublic.com. They cost £6.50. Children under four go free and need not be registered in advance. Young people aged 13 and over require an adult ticket. All children under 16 must be accompanied by an adult.

The tickets can be collected from Blythburgh Village Hall on Wednesday 16 July and Thursday 18 July between 6.00 pm and 7.00 pm. Identification and signature will be required. Last minute details and a timetable for the minibus service from the village to the festival will be printed in the July *Blythburgh Focus*.

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Memories of a happy Blythburgh life

By Andy Merriman

It suddenly hit me as I was walking down Church Lane recently that Grettle Cottage was purchased with the currency of belters, laughs and chortles. My father, Eric Merriman, was a successful comedy scriptwriter and, during what he would consider as his heyday in 1966, had purchased the cottage as a country retreat.

My first memory of Blythburgh was watching the World Cup Final against West Germany in July and while Geoff Hurst was notching his legendary hat-trick, my mum had decided to go shopping in Southwold. She later said: "It was very quiet in the town...I wonder if it's always like that." Happy days, you could park your car and buy a book in the town in the 1960's.

So for nearly fifty years I have been lucky enough to enjoy all the delights of our Blythburgh haven: first as a child, then as a hippy teenager - all purple loons and malodorous Afghan coat - and finally with my own family. "Sleepy Suffolk" was a place to relax, breathe in the intoxicating air, imbibe the bracing beer and soak up the bewitching atmosphere.

There have been a plethora of characters I have met over the years: ballet dancer and animal enthusiast Margaret Grubbe, then owner of the Priory, whom I accompanied in disrupting an otter hunt. By the river bank we dragged old blankets, dowsed in aniseed, around in ever increasing circles to throw the hounds off the scent and then watched in closeted triumph at the unfortunate bassets and beagles literally going around in circles.

Later, Miss Grubbe and I smugly observed the thwarted huntsmen drowning their sorrows in the White Hart. When we informed landlord Ted Humphries of our nefarious involvement, the colourful east ender, shrugged his shoulders and announced: "I fought in the war. Killing an otter doesn't seem so important." At the age of 14, I was outraged by his lack of compassion. Now, I understand exactly what he meant. I recall, with huge guilt, gently terrorising the village shop proprietor, Ronald Farquhar - a lovely man, but not exactly Harry Selfridge in his retail knowledge. He

was always quite unaware of his stock and my friends and I added to the 'fun' by requesting all sorts of ice creams that simply didn't exist.

As he hunted patiently through the freezer section searching for an avocado flavoured lolly or a runner bean ripple cornet, we thought it hilarious. I know it's much too tardy, but I am now really sorry for my appalling behaviour.

Hippy days were here in the late 1960's when the village took on the personality of an East Anglican Woodstock - a couple of radical medics at Church Farm were joined by young American servicemen blasting Jefferson Airplane and Hendrix, into the fields behind Daisy Bank. This was followed by a gradual politicisation and my guilt of second home ownership. I threatened to have the place squatted. Understandably dad banned me until I recanted.

When our daughter Sarah was born with Down's syndrome, and we were still coming to terms with all that that meant, we chose to stay in Suffolk for her first birthday. It was a place where we knew we could escape the naval gazing angst and self obsession of North London and immerse ourselves in the homespun philosophy and prevailing common sense.

A wondrous example of the down-to-earth Suffolk mentality followed the death of Church Lane resident Ivy Brabbing. As I steelled myself for widower Ephraim's reaction at the funeral not knowing how he would cope with the loss of his wife, he barked: "No need to worry about me. I'm alright. I went out and bought myself a microwave."

It's very difficult to bid farewell, but I know it to be the right decision. Grettle Cottage needs to be occupied far more than we can manage. The Merrimans have had lots of laughs and smiles in our Church Lane haven but on the day we locked up for the last time and bade farewell to the steadfast and marvellous Derek and Lily Kett, we shed not a few tears.

Thank you, Blythburgh for all those happy memories. Our hearts have been touched forever.



Blythburgh Suffolk

THE INN ON THE RIVER BLYTH

Luke and Jo the new managers at The White Hart, appointed by Greig and Adrian, wish Blythburgh residents and visitors a warm welcome. Visit them and their young family, including the new resident pub dog Sid, a lovely friendly Whippet. Enjoy stunning estuary views in our large garden; savour our freshly prepared food; and enjoy your favourite tipple.

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Sir John Blois Bt (1740-1810)

When the young French aristocrats François de La Rochefoucauld and his brother Alexandre passed through Yoxford in July 1784 on a Suffolk tour, they knew that Sir John Blois, 5th baronet, would not be at home.

The Frenchmen had already visited Lady Blois, a friend of their father's, living in a rented house at Melton, and learned that the Blois seat Cockfield Hall had been leased for 21 years to Chaloner Arcedekne. The Bloises would not recover it until 1793, when Arcedekne moved to his newly built Glevering Hall. There was worse news. The Blois estate had been in the hands of trustees for seven years from 1772 while debts were paid and was much reduced.

The problem was Sir John's addiction to gambling. He had fallen in with, among others, George 'Fighting' Fitzgerald, a nephew of the notoriously unstable Hervey family. He was not a man to be trifled with. In a short life he survived 12 duels, by, it was thought, cheating.

In 1786 he was hanged in Ireland, convicted by a County Sheriff known as 'Dennis the Rope', for his part in a murder. It would clearly have been advisable for Sir John to settle with such a creditor. Grundisburgh had to be sold. This estate had established the Bloises among the ranks of the gentry.

They bought it in the 16th century when successful mercers of Ipswich and after some 130 years had advanced to the rank of baronet. In 1647 Sir William Blois married into the

Brooke family of Blythburgh and his son Sir Charles, 1st baronet, moved into Cockfield Hall in 1693 on the deaths of his Brooke grandmother and her last surviving daughter.

The Suffolk antiquary David Elisha Davy described Sir John as puny in body and not much better in mind but Sir John's long life belies this description. He was a lawyer and married twice. His first wife was a sister of Mrs Barne of Sotterley. She died in 1766, two months after the birth of a son, Charles, who was to succeed as 6th baronet.

In 1772, already heavily in debt, Sir John married 17 year old Lucretia Ottley, daughter of a planter on St Kitts. She became very attached to Cockfield. Her remarks were recorded in the Rochefoucauld father's journal in 1794. 'Ah, Cockfield, Cockfield, quand m'y retrouvera-je! comme j'y serais soigné.' Her account book noted in 1781 Sir John's winnings at cards, suggesting that he was not cured of his addiction.

François probably had the Bloises in mind when he wrote an account in his journal entitled 'The Life of Those Who are Ruined'. They borrowed to pay their immediate debts, then economised for some years before, usually, returning to their old ways. Fortunately the years of economy meant that their heirs were rarely ruined. Thus Sir Charles, 6th baronet (1766-1850), was able to enjoy a long life at Cockfield 'almost entirely that of a private gentleman'.

Alan Mackley

YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS

Chair: David Tytler
01502 478521

Vice Chair/Chair planning
advisory group: Alan Mackley

Chair finance advisory group
John Blakesley

Councillors
Alan De Thabrew
Debbie Gifkins

Roderick Orr-Ewing

Clerk: Jim Boggis 01502 478687

BLYTHBURGH ASSOCIATIONS

Carpet Bowls

Beryl Stringer

Horticultural Society

Jenny Allen 01502 478314

Neighbourhood Watch

Rob Benson 01502 478047

Speed Watch

Binny Lewis 01502 478624

Village Hall

Olive Forsythe 01502 478521

BLYTHBURGH REFLECTIONS

Screaming spiders and other things

Visitors to Holy Trinity and residents of Church Road were somewhat puzzled on Bank Holiday Monday to see two men and a young boy (wearing Norwich City kit) with a large wheelbarrow full of boxes in a nearby field.

Upon closer inspection, our trio appeared to be digging holes in order to bury the rather large boxes. Sadly, their efforts seemed wasted as, in every case, a bit of the box was left sticking out of the ground. Strange...

Sometime later, figures were spotted trotting backwards and forwards to the church carrying bags, boxes, plates and candles. Stranger still.

Around teatime, bell ringers from Southwold, Reydon and Halesworth started to drift into the church and at 5:30 the first dongs of a quarter peel.

As the final dongs died away, a steady stream of folk made their way to the church. Helium balloons in the porch, jazz playing in the background and a welcome drink – something was definitely afoot.

The church was filled with chatter and laughter. During a “guess the country wine challenge” there was much chatter and the occasional quite vigorous disagreement. Food was eaten and friends were

greeted. As the tea lights started to cast shadows the focus shifted. Everyone gathered round, they raised a glass, they sang “Happy Birthday” and the rather spectacular candle on the cake was lit.

Led by the young boy, no longer wearing his Norwich City kit, a crocodile of almost a hundred people filed out of church and, taking care in the gathering darkness, made their way to a nearby field.

Whoosh! Bang! Explosions of colour lit the night sky. Those two strange men were back again creeping round those almost buried boxes.

Whoosh – Diablo, a 19 shot barrage. Ooh – Serpents Bite, another 19 shot wonder. Ah – Screaming Spiders, this time a 100

shot barrage.

We continued to ooh and ah as the night sky was filled with firework after firework, each more spectacular than the last.

The Thunderous Finale was best of all and it was followed by thunderous applause and cheers for our gracious hostess. Happy birthday Jenny Allen

Words: Sonia Boggis.
Illustration: Spike Gerrell



Art and Soul in Holy Trinity-----

Just over a year ago, a remarkable sculpture cast in bronze by local artist Laurence Edwards came to Holy Trinity as part of an exhibition. It was widely admired and its owner offered it on permanent loan.

After consultation with local residents and visitors, the church sought diocesan permission for its permanent installation. This was granted and on 26 May, Holy Trinity Sunday the sculpture will be dedicated at a special service at 4pm. All are welcome and the service will be followed by refreshments.

The work of another local artist is being celebrated in a series of events focusing on his life: *Harry Becker – Truth and Light*. He was a prodigious talent who lived in Wenhasston and Darsham 1912-28. His work has a fast-growing

reputation, focusing on East Anglia, particularly its labourers and their horses. Harry Becker, his wife, and two children are buried at Holy Trinity, and the church plays a part in the celebrations. Highlights include exhibitions of original work by Becker, some for sale. Details:

harrybeckertruthandlight.com

On Saturday 1 June, at 8pm, Holy Trinity will be hosting *Harry Becker – Truth and Light*, with music by Gordon Crosse, performed by the Lawson Trio, and poems by Tom Corbett set to music by Lisa Cassidy and Bridget Cousins, and sung by the Community Choir.

Tickets, £10 per head, are available on the door or from Café Frapa, Halesworth. From 1-23 June, visitors to Holy Trinity can view a Becker-inspired video installation by local artist Linda Farrow.

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From filthy workhouse to caring hospital...

By Emma Last

I remember how utterly ghastly Blythburgh Hospital was in 1947. It was a condemned workhouse of national ill repute; no money had been allocated to its upkeep. Never shall I forget our tour prior to interview.

The stench of dust-covered urine from an overflowing commode; thin brick floors; dark paint everywhere; broken glass topped walls divided the yards; padded punishment cells; broken windows; a leaking roof; no fires when the wind was in the wrong direction; lamp-smoked ceilings; no fire escapes; trestle beds in the attics with straw mattresses; and smoke-filled dayrooms.

The foul laundry was carried through the main kitchen as was the coal. There were evicted families, mothers with babies, high grade mental defectives, epileptics, anti-social behaviour, the aged, the widowed, and the unable to cope.

I have such memories of those poor totally apathetic patients with head lice, scabies and deep bed sores, emaciated contracted bodies and cruel staff who hit patients and burned them with scalding food and drink. While the residents were living in all this squalor the auditors would argue over a lost pair of bootlaces.

I believe that the board of guardians had an idea of the wind-of-change because my husband and I were appointed even though we had no experience of the poor law or workhouses. We commenced on April 1 1947 and for the next 30 years that building completely dominated our lives. We were the new assistant Master and Matron. The Master and Matron left after three months as they were sick of the scandal. We were encouraged to apply for their posts and we felt we could hardly do any worse.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From June 2, following an experiment of moving all Sunday morning services to 9.30am, Holy Trinity will revert to its previous pattern of alternating 9.30am on the first and third Sundays, Book of Common Prayer, and I I am, Common Worship, on the second and fourth. Services on major festivals such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter will be at I I am.

During 17 hours of monitoring during April by Speedwatch volunteers, the highest speeds recorded were 55mph on the A12 and 40mph on Dunwich Road, both within the 30mph zone.

Where to start? My husband and a colleague installed the first central heating in their own time. He had no clerical help, one driver and one general porter. I had a short weekly visit from a GP, no trained nursing staff but five inept untrained nursing staff who were "heartily sick of her (me) and her new fangled idea" and did not hesitate to say so, but I stuck to my guns.

We were on call 24 hrs a day. I had to administer all medication, my husband had to come to the wards to help me with epileptic patients who often needed suturing or plastering (my previous experience held me in good stead for these procedures).

I never dared do the night round at the same time each night after my first incident of hearing a dying man ask for help and being told "shut up you old bugger".

I asked the committee to change the name to Blythburgh and District hospital as I felt that otherwise I couldn't attract good applicants for nursing posts. From 1947 to 1977 I saw its transformation from a condemned workhouse to a modern hospital where patients were lovingly cared for.

By 1967 the standard of nursing was so high that Consultant Geriatrician Dr J Agate seconded a senior sister from Blythburgh to set the standard at the new Amulree wing at Ipswich Hospital.

The author was born in 1917 and died in 2010. She trained at Lowestoft and North Suffolk Hospital and worked at Guys Hospital, the Borough General, Ipswich, and Blythburgh and District Hospital 1947-1977. The article is based on her written recollections of her time in Blythburgh.

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Notes from Daisy Bank LVI

I love this time of year. Queen Ann's Lace just beginning to show along with the bluebells just around the corner and cowslips already on the banks of the road to Rumburgh, which is where we went last Monday.

It's one of our rituals, that trip every year to Rumburgh to watch the children trying to master the maypole on Rumburgh Green and the stalls selling everything from tat to plants with an overlay of hot dogs, home-made cakes and tea. Just safe enough inside the Saints not to get swallowed up by God knows who or what.

Many people, they say, have gone further in and never been seen again, swallowed up by the magic. When the Green Peace fair was alive and well in that part of the world, it had that mystical edge to it. All the sixties hippies and alternative people would come out of the woodwork and work their magic. Now a few make it to the Rumburgh Fair just to give us so called civilised people a taste of what used to be and might not be again.

If you have the courage to go further inland, you come across large tracts of land designated common land where locals can graze their animals for free or so it used to be. Miles of unspoilt wonderland with the odd interesting house. Most of the pubs have gone now as have the local shops sadly but the people still refuse to move out and who can blame them.

Although everybody by now knows how much Blythburgh means to me, I still hanker for inland Suffolk and the peace of it all. Why people from London clamour for the glamour of coastal Suffolk when for the same money they could buy a period mansion just a few miles inland I will never know. Perhaps it's that herding instinct that even the wealthy suffer from. Poor souls.

We're having a bit of a clear out in the garden and some parts are seeing light for the first time in 25 years. Shrubs, climbing and rambling roses are now the order of the day; they don't need too much maintenance. All gardens change and God know ours has drastically.

When we first came, it was incredible, having been organised by a professional gardener called Jack Kett, a relative of our neighbour. Subject to some neglect on our part it changed into a wild and overgrown version but still beautiful in its way. But now we're changing it yet again to a place where roses will rule.

On Saturday we went to have lunch at the Lower House in Laxfield, another one of these isolated Suffolk villages miles from anywhere just outside the Saints. When I first came to these here parts, there were three pubs that were bar-less which meant you had to order from barrels on the floor in the back room.

One was at Butley, one was on the road to Norwich, just before you hit the city, and the other was the Lower House, its real name being the King's Head.

Only the latter remains and for that reason, it is unique and a must to visit. In the summer you can even hire a horse and cart to take you for rides around the surrounding countryside and in the village is a museum which combines the bizarre and the macabre with some fascinating objects of local interest.

Before I begin to sound like a travelogue, all's well in Daisy Bank. Derek has a new dog called Linden, Lucy has had some more kittens or at any rate one of her cats has and Oscar the pheasant and his spouse still come for food in the morning. Bliss!

Paul Bennett

Reminder: raise a glass to Blythburgh

Enjoy a glass of wine and a bite to eat at the annual village meeting in Blythburgh Village Hall Friday May 17 at 7.00pm. Next Parish Council Meeting: Blythburgh Village Hall, July 8 at 7.30pm preceded by Open Forum. Come and have your say. Everybody welcome.