

BLYTHBURGH

FOCUS

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Issue No 76

<http://blythburgh.onesuffolk.net>

Aug/Sept 2024

LATITUDE TRUST VISIT TO SUFFOLK SHOW



Forty-nine Blythburgh residents enjoyed a free day out at the Suffolk Show at the end of May.

The Blythburgh Latitude Trust (which is funded by the sale of tickets to the Latitude Festival) offers an annual trip or visit open to all residents. In the past, there have been many trips to the pantomime in Norwich, but numbers have dwindled. This year, the Trust organised a visit to the Suffolk Show and a bus was laid on.

And a great day out was enjoyed by all. The weather was largely kind, and we were able to choose from a fantastic variety of events including

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show jumping, a wonderful show of Suffolk Punch horses and a huge variety of other horse and pony events. There was sheep judging, sheep dog trials, RAF Falcons Parachute Display Team, gun dog exercises, and a wide variety of cattle and goats. There was an amazing variety of food outlets to choose from as well as trade stands selling locally made foods and crafts.

The flower and garden show was well worth a visit and really there was something for everyone – a Military Zone, Sports Village, as well as a huge display of farming equipment. The Countryside and Wildlife area was hosted by Suffolk Wildlife Trust offering the opportunity to find out more about Suffolk wildlife.

The day passed incredibly quickly and it was soon time to return to the bus for the journey home. A truly excellent day out.

Val Carse



THE BLYTHBURGH LATITUDE TRUST IS HERE FOR YOU

The organisers of the Latitude Festival (Festival Republic) offer tickets to the festival which are sold to parish residents at an agreed price. The money generated by these sales is used to by the Trust to support community initiatives, and also to offer one-off grants to families or individuals who might need a helping hand.

Do you need to pay a recent bill? What about that school trip? Maybe you need a household aid or tools for the garden to make life easier? Or do you have a great idea that might benefit our community? If you think we might be able to help, just ask.

To apply, simply email: blythburgh.trust@gmail.com. All applications will be treated in complete confidence.

The Blythburgh Latitude Trust is making grants

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

**For your grant, contact
the honorary administrator,
Jim Boggis, Marsh End,
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***All applications will be treated in
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Apply now

**The trustees are Sarah Wickham, Val Carse, Malcolm Doney,
Roderick Orr-Ewing, Paul Lacey, Sue Ireland-Cutting, Harry
Waller and Tom Smith**

FROM GRAPE TO GLASS

When I started drinking wine, far more years ago than I care to remember, there weren't many vineyards in this area, and even the vineyards that did exist found that successfully ripening their grapes was



somewhat marginal and produced wines of inconsistent quality. Fast forward half a century and, amazingly, in 2023 the English & Welsh wine industry was the fastest growing agricultural sector in the UK, and 2023 was its largest ever grape harvest.

To celebrate English Wine Week (15 June to 23 June 2024) a local wine society, based out of the Marina Theatre in Lowestoft, hosted an English wine tasting to highlight the innovation occurring in our very local wineries and vineyards.

The evening was full of surprises, not least that the grapes for all the wines we tasted were grown within

35 miles of us here in Blythburgh, and we could have selected many more wines that fulfilled this criterion.

Throughout the evening, we tried a number of sparkling, white, rosé and red wines selected to highlight different styles of wine making and the range of grapes being used. A delicious traditional method sparkling wine made from a blend of Seyval Blanc and Phoenix grapes garnered the most first place votes at the end of the evening. But it was a close run thing, with both an oak fermented and aged Bacchus, and a Rioja-inspired Dornfelder (carbonic maceration & 18 months ageing in American Oak barrels) receiving eighty first place votes each.

In case you are wondering, there were 38 people at the tasting and we were all really impressed with the range and quality of the wines. *But*, and it is a big but, you can't ignore the price of a wine and, by and large, those present felt that overall the price points were north of what they would be happy to pay for their "everyday drinking wine".

English wine has built its reputation through sparkling wines and some now sit alongside famous Champagne labels on wine lists in top restaurants. The success of English sparkling wines has brought huge

levels of investment. Vineyards are being planted in every grape growing region of England & Wales, not just East Anglia. Wine makers are experimenting with different grapes, different wine styles, and our climate has become more conducive to successfully ripening a broader range of grapes. We have a number of excellent wineries on our doorstep who offer tours, tastings and often food options – if you would like to know more, pay them a visit.

Challenges remain, though. Will sales of English wine (both still and sparkling) keep pace with production? Can the industry widen distribution? Just 7% was exported in 2023. Can they soften price points? Competition from other countries is fierce. The key question everyone wants to answer is: just how much English wine will be bought and drunk in the years ahead? What do you think? If you drink wine, will English wine end up in your shopping basket?

Sonia Boggis



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WILD NOTES

Following the breeding season, the birds in my Blythburgh garden have gone quiet and all but disappeared. The adults were a constant presence at my feeders, then, towards the end of May and throughout most of June, their fledglings appeared *en masse*, being shown easy pickings by their parents. They included a male great-spotted woodpecker, getting a beak-full of suet and then flying into Charles and Rachel's *Cupressus macrocarpa* to feed a youngster, clinging to one of the huge boughs.

Woodpecker junior, still to change into adult plumage, still makes periodic visits, having learned well from dad. All the smaller passerines, however, have been in hiding. For the adults, this is the time of the year when they take a couple of months of rest and recuperation.

When I was in my late thirties, I trained to be a bird-ringer. For those who are new to this form of bird study, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) describes ringing as "...generat(ing) information on the survival, productivity and movements of birds, helping us to understand why populations are changing".

Throughout the UK, there are many 'constant effort sites', where each month ringers gather to sample the bird populations and record their results. Birds are safely caught in mist nets, checked for species and sex, aged and weighed, and then a uniquely numbered ring is placed around a leg. All this info is recorded and sent to the BTO.

If the bird already has a ring (a recapture), the date of recapture and ring number is also recorded. This info gives a valuable record of bird movements, whether the bird is a migrant species or a resident.

Birds caught in April and May usually show a bare skin patch on their breasts – a 'brood patch'. By June, adult birds usually look rather battered and threadbare as well. The toll on their health of bringing up babies shows in a prominent breast-bone and worn out tatty feathers.

But, if you're fortunate enough to recapture that same bird in late August or September, you witness an almost miraculous transformation. The bird you previously recorded as an underweight shabby individual has been transformed. Its belly is full and the feathers are brand new and perfect. It is about as close to being 'reborn' as you can get in nature.

A sad looking, worn out bird has been repaired with the precision of a Swiss watch.

Paul Lacey



Adult goldcrest, ringed in March 2018



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BLYTH BELLES HIT THE CHOCOLATE

The recent visit by 12 Belles to Tosier Chocolatemaker's small batch chocolate factory in Middleton was a great success. Deanna Tilston gave an informative talk on the journey from cocoa bean to chocolate, "Bean to Bar", emphasising the difference between the cheaper brands of chocolate and *their* version of chocolate – which is limited in ingredients but high in quality and made with great care and timing and expensive machinery.

It was good to hear that their product is used in award winning restaurants locally. The anxious wait was over, and we all got to taste the chocolate – in a controlled manner so we should appreciate the quality of texture and taste.

After the talk, many purchases were made and no doubt the Belles were keen to get home to try the taste test again - several times!

The next Belles visit is to the Southwold Flower Company in Reydon on Thursday 8 August, which we are reliably informed is really enjoyable. Let's hope for a sunny evening!

Mary Gundry



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BLYTHBURGH CHURCH

Curlew River

For two nights at the end of June, Holy Trinity Blythburgh was transformed into the set of an epic Benjamin Britten opera, *Curlew River*, as part of the Aldeburgh Festival. Based on a piece of Japanese Noh theatre, Britten and his librettist William Plomer transposed its Buddhist element to a Christian one with the aura of a mystery play. Its setting in Blythburgh was apt, because of our location near the River Blyth – renamed by Britten for the significance of curlews in the text. The opera featured a star cast, including Willard White and Ian Bostridge, and was filmed by the BBC for later broadcast. The redemptive drama received a rapturous response from the audience, and the *Guardian* review said, “This was certainly an evening to reinforce the view that *Curlew River* itself constitutes a minor musical miracle.”

Animal magic

We can't promise curlews at our annual **Animal Service**, but there should be plenty of domestic fauna, at this hugely popular event, to be held this year on **Sunday 18 August at 11am**. All creatures, great and small, are welcome.

Angel voices

2024 sees the anniversaries of some of the towering figures of Romantic choral music: Charles Villiers Stanford, Edward Bairstow and Anton Bruckner. **On Saturday 10 August at 7.30pm**, the critically-acclaimed **Luceat Choir** bring an a cappella programme featuring some of their finest contributions to Blythburgh Church. Entrance free, donations invited.

Coffee time

As ever on the **last Friday of the month, 30 August, and 27 September** we invite you to meet friends and neighbours at our Café and Mini-Market **10.30-12 noon**.

Harvest Festival

Our **Harvest Festival** service is scheduled for **Sunday 15 September at 11.15 am** and followed by **Harvest Lunch**. Everyone is welcome to the service and to stay for lunch please let Jenny Allen know if you'd like to join us: jennyanddick@aol.com.

BOB FLOWERDEW AND MORE!

Early in June, almost 50 members and guests packed into Blythburgh Village Hall for the eagerly anticipated visit of Bob Flowerdew to talk



about “No Work Gardening”. Bob is a regular panel member of BBC Radio 4's *Gardeners' Question Time* and a really entertaining speaker. He has nearly an acre of garden in Dickleburgh (Norfolk) and according to his bio he loves, amongst other things: “gardening, scented plants, good food, cats and outrageous ideas”. His stories and ideas were relatable, practical and, in many cases, amusing. In summary, his mantra was that gardening isn't hard work if you enjoy it – so only grow things you like to eat (strawberries were mentioned) and avoid growing an enormous excess of things which one can't possibly eat – broad beans anyone?

Bob was going to be a hard act to follow, but was more than matched by our Summer show (see pictures opposite) with

another record number of entries.

Our Summer Garden Party, hosted this year by Rachel and Charles Morris, takes place on 10 August. We hope the weather will be kind as we enjoy food & drinks in the beautiful surroundings of The Green. We are most grateful to Rachel and Charles for opening their garden to members of the Horticultural Society.

Looking further ahead to 18 September, we welcome Marion Cannell who joins us for a talk entitled “The Honey Bee & The Honey” which includes a honey tasting.

New members are always welcome, so please get in touch if you would like to join us: membership of the Horticultural Society is £5 a year. *Full committee for 2024: Val Carse (Chair), Jenny Allen (Treasurer), Sonia Boggis (Secretary), Terry Goss, Sue Ireland-Cutting, Claire Lyth, Rachel Morris, Carol Nichols, Sarah Wickham, Cilla Wilson.*

Sonia Boggis, Secretary

sonia.boggis@btinternet.com



LIVELY LOCAL HISTORY

Shop on Wheels: A bicycle, trailer and searchlight battery. A wartime diary, Suffolk 1942-44 M Janet Becker

Edited by Alan Mackley, 2024

A small, brown attaché case containing papers, drawings, prints, a collection of poems and a hand-written diary are the stuff of historians' dreams. Such a case belonged to Janet Becker, writer, poet, historian and church conservationist, and the diary is a record of her entrepreneurial efforts to be of help to the Royal Artillery searchlight unit in Henham Park. The case came into the possession of Simon Loftus, whose family supported the Becker family and collected works by the artist Harry Becker, Janet's father. Simon shared the case's contents with Blythburgh writer and historian Alan Mackley, and the idea of this lovely little book was born.

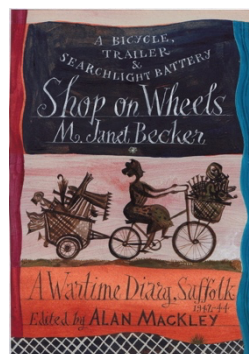
Janet's occasional diary records her adventures with the trailer that she attached to her bicycle. With entries beginning on 30 December 1942, she charts her visits to the Searchlight Unit deep in the Suffolk Sandlings, a dangerous area where the army conducted battle training with live ammunition. Her aim was to provide some home comforts to the men stationed there. She carried necessities like razor blades, Brylcreem and Mars bars, repaired clothes, and even hand-made valentines for the men at war. She describes the various characters she met and got to know with wry humour and sharp observation, and she has a keen eye for the various pets that enlivened the camp.

The tone of the entries is generally light-hearted and engaging, but there are hints of the difficulties and dangers that people faced. "I was in the baker's shop," Janet writes, "getting cakes when two Liberators crashed and fell in the park (Henham). First there were two big explosions (the bombs falling as the planes disintegrated) and then the whine and scrape of machinery gone wrong."

With a painstaking editorial eye, Alan Mackley has brought to life Janet's vivid, first-hand and very local wartime experiences. And the addition of a sparky cover design by another Blythburgh resident, illustrator Jeff Fisher, creates a beautiful little book.

Shop on Wheels is on sale for £5.00 at Blythburgh Church and local bookshops.

Meryl Doney



BLYTHBURGH FIELD NOTES

The spring wader passage continued throughout the rest of May and into June, with Common Sandpiper, Greenshank, Spotted Redshank, Ringed Plover and Ruff all frequenting the Blyth, along with more Northern Arctic breeding species such as Little and Temminck's Stints, the latter species is tiny and looks a bit like a miniature Common Sandpiper. Due to the often incredibly short Arctic summers it has developed an intriguing breeding system, the female after mating normally lays a clutch of four eggs, which the male then incubates, while she goes off and finds a new mate and lays another clutch, which she then incubates, thus increasing the chance of fledging young. Well over 90% of all waders lay their eggs in a scrape on the ground, which makes them extremely vulnerable to predation, while the short summers in Northern climes allow very little opportunity for second broods. There are normally less than a hundred records a year of this scarce species, although I once found a nest of this bird in Scotland.

Among the very few exceptions to ground nesting waders, are Green and Wood Sandpipers, which often use the already used nests mainly of thrushes, such as Fieldfare and Blackbird, perhaps reducing the chance of predation and saving time finding suitable places to make a scrape.

Up to two Osprey frequented the Northern end of the Blyth for nearly two weeks, while the first pair of breeding Yellow Wagtails for over thirty years were present along the East side, although they nested in the adjoining parish.

Brown Hares have always been fairly scarce in our parish, but exceptionally good numbers have been present this year, especially around Hinton. It's also an amazing year for Pyramidal Orchids, there are even a couple of flower spikes on the left of the footpath to the village hall.

I Nonowt

Your Parish Councillors

Chair: Roderick Orr-Ewing

Planning Advisory Committee:

Paul Lacey

Finance Advisory Committee: Roderick Orr-Ewing,

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

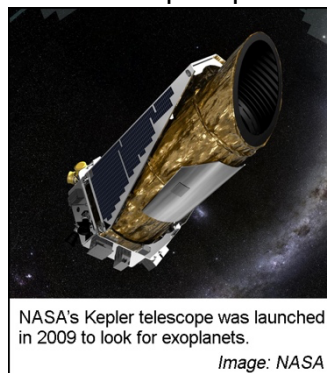
Clerk: Nick Rees

STARRY, STARRY NIGHT

At this time of year you have to wait until 10pm to see any stars. Look overhead and the two brightest are Vega and Deneb in the constellations of Lyra and Cygnus. The remaining stars in these constellations are not very bright – so why do I find this area of the sky interesting?

Have you heard of the term 'exoplanet'? An exoplanet orbits a star other than our Sun – and hence is beyond our solar system with its collection of eight planets. Over recent years, more exoplanets have been discovered in this area of the sky due to the work of the Kepler space telescope.

In 2009, Nasa launched Kepler, named after a 17th-century German astronomer, and perhaps less well known than others such as the Hubble and James Webb telescopes. Kepler's mission was to stare continuously at 150,000 stars in the area between Vega and Deneb, looking for tiny dips in the brightness of each star that would indicate an exoplanet passing in front of it.



Kepler continued operating until 2018 when it ran out of fuel. By that time it had detected more than 2,600 exoplanets. Many of these are in the so-called Goldilocks Zone, which means that they are the right distance from their stars to have the conditions needed to form the basis of life, most particularly the possibility of water on their surface.

These findings only relate to this small area of the sky. Kepler's field of view covered only 0.25% of the sky. There is every chance that similar observations could be made throughout the Milky Way. One conclusion drawn from the Kepler data is that between 20% and 50% of stars are likely to have exoplanets similar in size to the Earth, possibly with rocky surfaces and situated in their Goldilocks Zone. NASA estimate that there are 100 billion stars in the Milky Way. The number of galaxies in the universe is anyone's guess, but the lowest estimate I have seen is again 100 billion. So you do the maths as to how many exoplanets there might be – but you will need a big calculator!

To me, it seems inconceivable that the Earth is the only planet that supports life, and just maybe some of the best candidates are in the area of sky between these two bright summer stars. However, I'm not expecting a visit from aliens any time soon.

Colin Huggins

EVENTS AT HALESWORTH LIBRARY

Seasonal events at the library kick off with the *Board Games Café* on **Monday 5 August and Monday 30 September between 2 and 4pm** (drop in any time). It's open to all ages and abilities. Have fun and enjoy tea and cake.

There are sessions of our regular *Sociable Sunday* events on the **11 and 25 August, and 8 and 22 September from 10.30–12.30**.

Looking ahead, author Elizabeth Wilde McCormick will be in conversation with Abbie Clements of Halesworth Bookshop about her trilogy of novels featuring psychotherapist Dr Max Maxwell on **Thursday 19 September at 2.30**.

All events take place in Halesworth Library, and are organised by the Friends of Halesworth Library. Attendance is free. For more information email us at friendsofhalesworthlibrary@gmail.com, or speak to the library assistants.

Catherine Draper

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SOLICITORS & NOTARIES

DAISY BANK CXIX

A couple of weeks ago I was wiping bird droppings off the blue car when another car pulled up on the other side of the car park. An unknown woman got out and advanced towards me waving her hand to attract my attention. "Are you Paul O'Leary?" she asked. "I used to be," said I. It turned out that this very middle-class lady would come with her disabled mother to my exhibitions up at the church every year. And every year she would buy a picture. One of these was a very large oil painting looking from our back gate across the marshes.

After ascertaining that I was *Paul O'Leary*, she told me that several years ago her mother had moved into residential accommodation, and that she had requested that the picture be placed at the bottom of her



bed so that she could still see it. Sadly, a few years later she died. Her daughter told me that it was now in her house and that people always admired it when they visited as they had also done when it was in her mother's house. All very gratifying and a mini-boost to my ego.

And the picture of the blue car? Our friends Alison and Nigel sent us a copy. Evidently, it was found by Nigel on a web site entitled "Stunning Suffolk", and it had lots of 'likes', whatever they are. So popular was the picture that the photographer sent in another, this time just of the car. So we are now in possession of a famous car. No doubt crowds will come to admire it over the next few months before they enter and enjoy our magnificent Cathedral of the Marshes!

Daisy Bank is still suffering from all this rain and the roses are a particular casualty to the lack of sun. At the time of writing, it's mid-July and we are still in the thrall of winter. I remember when I first came here in 1987, we had a succession of wonderful summers. Boating and swimming in the creek and wonderful, wonderful heat. It was truly a magical time and gave us both wonderful memories. Sadly, with climate change, I don't see that happening again.

Paul Bennett

KENNEDY DEATH – 80TH ANNIVERSARY

On 12 August 1944, two brave American fliers lost their lives in the skies above Blythburgh in the pursuit of peace and the defence of our country. The recent 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings, both a reminder of the hardship and loss of many nationalities that year, throws a spotlight on this event which took place just months after D-Day.

Joseph P Kennedy Jr was the 29-year-old eldest son of Joseph P Kennedy Sr (who had been US Ambassador to Britain at the start of the war), and brother of future US President John F Kennedy. He and his co-pilot Wilford J Willy took off from an airfield near Diss on a US Navy (USN) Operation Anvil mission. The objective was to destroy the German V3 'super gun' site – an underground concrete bunker in Mimoyecques, near Calais, northern France, whose shells were to be aimed at London.



Their Liberator aircraft was essentially a flying bomb, loaded with over 20,000lbs of Torpex. It had been adapted



to be controlled remotely by an aircraft flying behind, once the crew had bailed out over Kent. The overall projects to use worn out bombers as radio controlled flying bombs were called Operation Anvil (USN) and Operation Aphrodite (USAF). Joe Kennedy had completed 25 combat missions and was eligible to return home, but instead volunteered for the first of the Operation Anvil missions. 'Bud' Willy, an expert on radio control systems, pulled rank on Kennedy's regular co-pilot in order to take part in the operation.

Tragically, due to an electrical fault, the aircraft exploded in mid-air over Blythburgh. It was one of the largest explosions ever recorded over

Britain. The damage on the ground was widespread – 147 houses were affected – but there were no civilian casualties.

Blythburgh resident Mick Muttitt, at nine years old, looked up to see the planes as they flew overhead: “I watched in horror as the lead aircraft exploded in a huge fireball. I vividly remember seeing burning wreckage falling earthwards, while engines with propellers still turning – and leaving comet-like trails of smoke – continued along the direction of flight before plummeting down.” Other villagers, including the late Derek Kett and Tom Lond-Caulk, had vivid memories of the drama.



Joe Kennedy Jr's father was very politically ambitious and had groomed his eldest son to run for the presidency. His grandfather, the Mayor of Boston, described his baby grandson as the

future president of the nation. In the event, it was his younger brother, JFK, who became president and, as they say, the rest is history. We will never know how history may have been different had it not been for the events over Blythburgh on that summer evening.

Malcolm Doney and Colin Huggins

There is a board memorialising the deaths of Kennedy and Willy in Holy Trinity, Blythburgh featuring the specially commissioned painting of a Liberator by John Constable Reeve shown here.

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