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* *'The Town beneath the Cliff' was published in Volume 2 under the name 'The Town Under the Cliff' and so is not reproduced here.*

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ALL BECAUSE OF THE HERRING*by D. Butcher*

It is some years now since the North Sea 'ran' with herring, and the fleets of drifters that once plied from Lowestoft and Yarmouth are but a memory in people's minds. Catches today are reckoned merely by the boxful, where even 20 years ago, craft were landing between 100 and 200 cran fairly regularly. What is more, it is only a handful of longshore boats that now carry on the trade such as it is. Lowestoft has become a trawler base, while Yarmouth is no longer even a fishing port, having gone over to container traffic and the provisioning and maintenance of gas rigs. How sad that the livelihood and tradition of centuries should have gone.

The matter under discussion in this article concerns the traditional rivalry between the two ports, which goes back over about 600 years and still hasn't completely died out. It's a fascinating story, but one that is also extremely complex – such is the frequency of petition and cross-petition, of granting this privilege to one place and then modifying it to accommodate the feelings of the other. Of a necessity, then, the account that follows is a drastic simplification, but not, I hope, inaccurate.

Neither town had a particularly auspicious start as far as actual position went. Yarmouth clings precariously to a sandbank at the mouth of the Yare-Bure-Waveney estuary, while Lowestoft huddled on its cliff, hanging on against the east wind. There was only one real advantage in all of this, the vast shoals of herring that thronged the seas every autumn, and it was Yarmouth that first capitalised on their presence. From quite early on (mid-Saxon period) a flourishing trade developed and this gradually expanded to cater not only for south-eastern England but the continent as well. It was out of this that the famous Free Fair in herring grew, eventually becoming one of the greatest international trade gatherings in mediaeval Europe. It lasted from Michaelmas (September 29th) to St. Martin's Day (November 11th) and saw a large influx of various nationalities, with catches being sent to all parts of Europe and the Middle East.

Naturally, Lowestoft very much the poorer relation, looked on this enviously. There wasn't much she could do though, because Yarmouth had got the head start and so it became a matter of learning to exist in the shadow of a more powerful neighbour, snatching a living from the sea as best as might be done. It is interesting to note, in fact, that throughout the whole of the early middle ages, Yarmouth never really considered Lowestoft as much of a rival. For one thing, the Suffolk settlement was little more than a village (Corton, Pakefield, Kirkley and Kessingland were all more important); for another, the Cinque Ports, posed far more of a threat because of their traditional right to share in the administration of the Free Fair, a rivalry that reached its peak in 1297 when Yarmouth and Kentish ships settled their differences while escorting the King of Flanders back to his own country.

During the 14th century, however, the importance of the Channel ports began to decline and this coincided – it may even have helped – with a rise in Lowestoft's prosperity (it is interesting to note that the 2 mediaeval cellars at the top of the High Street date from about 1330 – they were once the 'under-crofts' of substantial houses). It was now the trial of strength really began, though Yarmouth received a tremendous fillip in 1340 when, as a reward for her services at the naval battle of Sluys,

Edward III halved his royal arms with those of the town. It still proudly bears this crest – the Lions of England crossed with three silver herring – and with good reason; in this crushing humiliation of the French, Yarmouth supplied more vessels than all the Cinque Ports put together, and one of the Co-Admirals of the English Fleet was John Perebrowne, the Port Bailiff. The other Commander was Sir John de Norwich who was allowed to fortify his manor house at Mettingham (near Bungay) in acknowledgement of his part in the victory.

So much for the crest of the wave. The first real hint that Yarmouth took the growing challenge from Lowestoft seriously came in 1357, when the statute of Herrings (again the result of royal favour) decreed that no fish was to be sold within seven miles of Yarmouth, except at the autumnal Free Fair. The effect of this was intended to be twofold (a) it prevented Lowestoft and other rival fishing villages encroaching on the Norfolk's town and trade and (b) it sought to regularise the conduct of the Free Fair and give everybody an equal chance in trading at the time of its being held. The only people able to break this ordinance were the London fish merchants, who were allowed to purchase herring from Yarmouth boats anywhere in Kirkley Roads.

Within two years of the statute being passed, the merchants of Winterton and Lowestoft, having petitioned the King successfully, were also able to buy fish beyond the period of the Free Fair within the limits prescribed above. This gave both places a foothold in an industry Yarmouth had always held to be its own prerogative. Not long after this the first Yarmouth Haven (there have been seven altogether, including the one of today, and the first five were all plagued with silting up) began to fill in with sand, making navigation increasingly more difficult. It only lasted from 1346 to 1372 and was situated near the lost village of Newton, which once lay somewhere between Corton and Gorleston – probably between the Rogerson Hall camp and the present village of Hopton. Newton village itself was actually claimed by the sea in the great storm of 1350, so obviously the haven survived this incursion.

However, the infilling with tidal and wind-blown sand was a great problem, so Yarmouth petitioned Edward III to grant a charter protecting her trade against the competition of Lowestoft and alleviating the distress caused by the blocking of her harbour mouth. Edward had good cause to listen to these requests; Yarmouth was an important naval town and one which had, of course, already served him well. In 1371 he sent a Commission to look into the town's grievances; it reported favourably and in 1373 the King granted a charter which was to result in 300 years of strife and wrangling between the citizens of both towns.

What it did in effect, was give Yarmouth two clear advantages over Lowestoft (a) it gave the Norfolk town complete control over the Kirkley Roads, with the right of taking tolls from any boat discharging cargoes in any part of these waters; (b) it prohibited the buying and selling of herrings during the Free Fair at any place on land or sea within '7 leacae' of Great Yarmouth, except at the town itself. It is clear that a 'leuca' meant a distance of nearly 2 miles as the Commission which led to the charter, stated that Lowestoft was '5 leuca' from Yarmouth.

Three centuries of bickering and rivalry are too lengthy to recount in any great detail, but even in the same year this controversial charter was granted the Yarmouth Bailiffs, whose job it was to enforce the law, found that Lowestoft merchants were flouting its conditions openly. A certain John Botild purchased 25 illegal 'lasts' of herring (10 crans to the last) in the late autumn of 1373, was arrested for it, appealed to the King and was called to Westminster in the Spring Law Term of 1374 his trial was adjourned and we don't know the eventual outcome, but by 1376 the townspeople were already presenting a petition to Parliament for the repeal of the hated charter.

Such was the support for Lowestoft from the Commons of East Anglia and the East Midlands, that the old King was forced to withdraw his charter (the Black Prince was on the side of the Commons), but it was renewed in 1378 following Richard II's accession to the throne. It's proclamation in Lowestoft led to a serious riot (stirred up by local merchants), which in turn led to a commission of enquiry in 1380 under the Chief Justice, Sir Robert Tresilian. This was favourable to Lowestoft and so the charter was revoked once again, the following year. But Yarmouth had not given up and after Richard had paid her a visit in 1382, (he was told that the repeal of the charter had caused 'a great part of the people' to leave the town) things swung her way once again, culminating in another confirmation of the charter in 1384.

Wait for it! A repeal followed in 1385 and yet another confirmation in 1386, by which time the Commons had, for some reason, become favourably disposed towards Yarmouth and thus supported it. This was the end of the granting and re-granting for a long, long while, but it didn't really give

Yarmouth the stranglehold she envisaged. In fact she found it very difficult to enforce her paper supremacy, and by the end of the century, she had even come to a tacit agreement with the Lowestoft merchants, which enabled the latter to trade more or less freely in herring as long as they paid certain and specified tolls. This agreement, or 'composition' as it was known was formally recognised by letters patent in the year 1400.

This was the end of litigation between the two towns for nearly 200 years, though the keen rivalry still continued and did erupt into hostilities from time to time. What actually caused legalities to break out again towards the end of the reign of Elizabeth I, one can only guess at, but obviously feelings were coming to a head once more. Apparently the rights and wrongs of the case were argued back and forth until a decision of the Court concerned stated, in 1595, that a 'lauca' was a standard English mile and no more. Seven miles was duly measured from Crane Quay at Yarmouth (what we now call Hall Quay) and a post set up on the shore to mark the limit of her sphere of influence (1596).

Technically speaking, this marker wasn't strictly legal, but it was set up somewhere along the beach at Gunton. The Lowestoft people were not at all satisfied, however, because of Yarmouth's refusal to accept the demarcation. During the Protectorate they got no redress at all because Yarmouth was one of the main Parliamentary strongholds (Charles I's death warrant was possibly signed in the house of Giles Corbet, Cromwell's lawyer, who lived at 4 South Quay, but on the restoration of Charles II in 1660 they could hope for better things. Lowestoft was one of the few towns in East Anglia to remain overtly loyal to the Crown (one theory is that the inhabitants were loyalists simply because Yarmouth was solid for the Puritan cause), a fact that resulted in Cromwell himself, paying a visit in March 1643. Another thing to annoy supporters of Parliament was the way Sir Thomas Allin, Lowestoft's leading sailor, attacked English shipping, especially Yarmouth boats, from his base over in Holland – this being his main contribution to the Royalist party during the later years of the Protectorate.

As soon as the monarchy was reinstated, we find the Lowestoft citizens once again petitioning for redress of their grievances. Charles II seemed sympathetic, but it was some time before a decision was reached. When it finally came from the House of Lords, it merely reiterated the judgement of 1595, though with an accompanying order to the Sheriffs of Norfolk and Suffolk to measure the distance of 7 miles from Crane Quay, Yarmouth, along the shore towards Lowestoft and to place there a new post to mark where Yarmouth's jurisdiction ended.

This was duly carried out in May, 1663 but Yarmouth refused to recognise its legality, which necessitated a further fixing in June. It still wasn't the end of the matter, though, and it wasn't until Charles II gave Yarmouth a new charter in 1684 that it was finally stated for good and all 'that the word leuca mentioned in divers former charters signifies an English mile and no more, as declared by the House of Lords in the 15th year of our reign' (by Royalist reckoning Charles II reign began in 1649 after the execution of his father). The spot where the 7 miles from Crane Key was to end was on Gunton Denes, about 150 yards south of Tramps Alley, and the marker became known as 'Corton Pole' because of its proximity to that place's parish boundary.

The post set up in 1663 was washed down a few years afterwards (it had been placed too near the sea) and so in 1676 another one was erected a bit further inland. As the years passed, there was a need to replace the marker from time to time in order to compensate for the sea's encroachment, on the land, but the 7 miles was still clearly defined as late as the beginning of this century. The coastguards from the station at Corton were in the habit of using the last post (it was pitch-pine) to test life saving apparatus up till about 1905. Apparently it served to anchor the hawsers on their breeches buoy. At a later date, it was removed to the old Corton playing field (now incorporated into the ground of Corton Beach Holiday Camp) from where it was removed, sawn up, and used for gate post around the village. One mouldering piece of it is now in possession of the Society's Museum.

David Butcher

AN INTRODUCTION TO INVENTORIES

by L. Mudderman

In its simplest sense an inventory is a list of possessions of a householder drawn up for various purposes.

Most extant inventories date from early 16th century to early 19th century and come from ecclesiastical court records. They were drawn up on the death of a householder to assess the value of the estate. The executors or administrators of the deceased's estate entered into a bond to exhibit a true inventory of his 'Goods, Rights, Chattels and Credits' which had to be legally delivered, registered, stamped and sealed in the presence of a surrogate (he was the deputy for an ecclesiastical judge, or bishop, in his legal role). The inventory was then sent to the person who granted probate or letters of administration, usually the diocesan court, sometimes a monastery or college. It was attached to the will to allow accurate disposal of the properties of the deceased. The immediate values of this were to protect the executors from excessive claims upon the estate, and protect relatives. It also gave the court a basis for the assessment of its fees which were on a sliding scale.

Appraisal.

The duties placed upon executives were fairly onerous, drawing up the inventory being a major task. They had to investigate and value all the household furniture and articles, plate, cloth, jewels, money, debts, livestock, poultry, corn, hay, felled timber, husbandry implements, and stock in trade of the deceased. This must have been a daunting task when a large or even a moderate estate was at question and although they were to be 'honest and skilful persons' they were not always literate or highly skilled at valuation, especially when it came to specialist items, such as the apothecaries stock. A hopeful note creeps into some assessments and occasionally desperation as when the final item is listed as 'Lumbar seen and not seen.'

Allowances must be made for omissions. Inventories need not include 'fish, covies, deer or pigeons if found in pond, warren, park or dovehouse' (but are included if tamed). The property in the right of the husband or wife was not included when the spouse died. Certain items may have been given away by deed of gift before death, or be classed as heirlooms, or the relatives may already have 'removed' them from the house. The valuers are also suspect of making errors although most appear to have been excessively conscientious, itemising details with exacting care. Some of the inventories were written in a fair script and 'modern' spelling, others are less easy to read and the spelling has strong overtones of the local dialect. It will often help to read uncertain words aloud.

Goods are usually itemised room by room but occasionally are grouped under other headings such as Linen, Gold and Silver. Farming implements, crops, and stock can be listed within buildings e.g., 'barn', but may appear under a general heading 'Abroad'.

Social Information.

The inventory provides a fascinating insight into the life of 'ordinary' people in the past. This information is less well documented usually so inventories offer a unique chance to enter home and lives of individuals. It is possible given a large number of inventories, to obtain a certain amount of statistical evidence.

Houses.

Unfortunately, the address of the deceased does not normally appear on an inventory but in some cases it may be possible to trace the building in a parish from the description of the rooms and layout. This, however, requires luck and a very small parish.

Usually the executors enter the house by a main door and carry out the inventory logically, moving from room to room and going to another floor as they come to the stairs. However, this is not an infallible rule.

Rooms.

The rooms are predominantly functional with the exception of the parlour. This appears to contain special items of furniture and was possibly only used on special occasions. Most households in the 18th century had to provide for their own needs and so rooms are allotted for this e.g. dairy, bakehouse, brewery, wash house.

One possible exercise with a large number of inventories is to discover the average number of rooms in a house at a particular period of time, or the most common rooms in any house, taking urban and rural situations as quite separate problems. Inventories in quantity can be seen in the Record Office.

Furnishing.

Most items inside the house were included, furniture, furnishings and utensils. From this one can build up a picture of the essentials required by a household in the eighteenth century. Cooking utensils are of basic importance particularly spits and irons of all kinds. Few plates, cups or eating implements are listed unless of an unusual material such as pewter, silver or china. This does not mean that they were not possessed – merely that nothing was presumably valuable enough to list. It is apparent that most households had at some time accommodated large families; great numbers of chairs and beds are included. The chairs must give a truer indication to the size of the household as the beds were often shared by several persons.

It is interesting to note imported goods and items of special value such as looking-glasses, clocks, prints and maps.

Furnishing is listed: bed linen, curtains (still fairly uncommon in homes of all but the wealthy) and tapestry hangings. Carpets are uncommon until the nineteenth century.

Debts.

Most inventories will have at least one brief reference to 'debts - good and bad'. Often the sum is considerable and far exceeds the cash in the house. The debts usually owed by the deceased are also of frightening proportions as can be seen from inventories where the discharge of debts is included.

This provides very valuable evidence on the balance of local economy. Ready money seems to have been scarce in the eighteenth century so debts and loans were unpaid for many years – often both parties owing to the other. The small business man or domestic tradesman with whom we are here concerned was particularly vulnerable to this system.

MEDIEVAL POTTERY FROM COVEHITHE

by Paul Durbidge

The presence of medieval pottery from Covehithe cliffs, has been observed now for more than two years. Small fragments can be found lying on ploughed land just before reaching Benacre Broad and I have observed shards close to the large peat blocks lying on the beach adjacent the Broad. In the majority of cases, remains have been small with a few exceptions, usually thickened rim types or part base; those surviving by way of their heavier fabric. The main quantity of pottery dates from the 15th century, with a few 17th century additions as well as stoneware occasionally turning up to complete the scene. Continual observation of the cliff face over the last two years, has shown remains of a medieval pit containing ash, pottery and animal bones, a parallel line of cobbles and suggestions of a small wall foundation composed of cobbles and mortar with the occasional brick employed to assist in the construction. These are some of the visual features from one part with sea action, continually destroying features, while sometimes uncovering others some time later. During my observation at Cove, erosion has been very noticeable and since June of last year, at least 40 feet of cliff has fallen at one point alone, a steady rate of destruction extending through to Benacre Broad. The presence of the sea bringing down cliff, has a devastating effect on pottery whether it is in large or small form. Pottery discarded in medieval times and deposited in a pit or similar situation, often has comparatively sharp edges, but when subjected to sea action, the article is rolled and abraded often beyond recognition. Glaze is frequently rasped off by sea and grit action, while edges became rounded and smoothed. The fabric of the shards takes considerable pummelling making dating difficult.

This highlights the importance of continual visits to an area of this type and it has paid off several times. Since early May of last year, small green glazed shards of 15th century pottery were recovered in situ close to Benacre Broad, and as continued visits were made throughout the summer, a sizeable amount of pottery was gradually collected, all of which was contained within an eight feet area. Sea action changed the picture frequently, revealing shards on one visit and throwing up a great shingle bank the next. All the pottery shards were recovered from a peat-like material, with some top soil overlaying natural clay, in fact at times much of the pottery was exposed on the clay after the top cover had been washed away. At one stage, there was a suggestion of a pit within the clay, but the incision was not deliberate enough to my mind, at the time. As well as this, although it produced the pottery in the form of glazed shards, as well as fragments of cooking pots etc., there was no sign of

anything else. For the most part the pottery was in good condition, with the neck of a green glazed jug, looking remarkably fine after being thrown away for so many years. Glazed shards suggested at least eight different glazed types of green, and two of brown, most of the coarseware types were grey in colour, with evidence of soot or blackening to their surfaces. Included with the pottery finds one must consider the reason for so much pottery and also the presence of much crushed brick and occasional carbon finds at this spot.

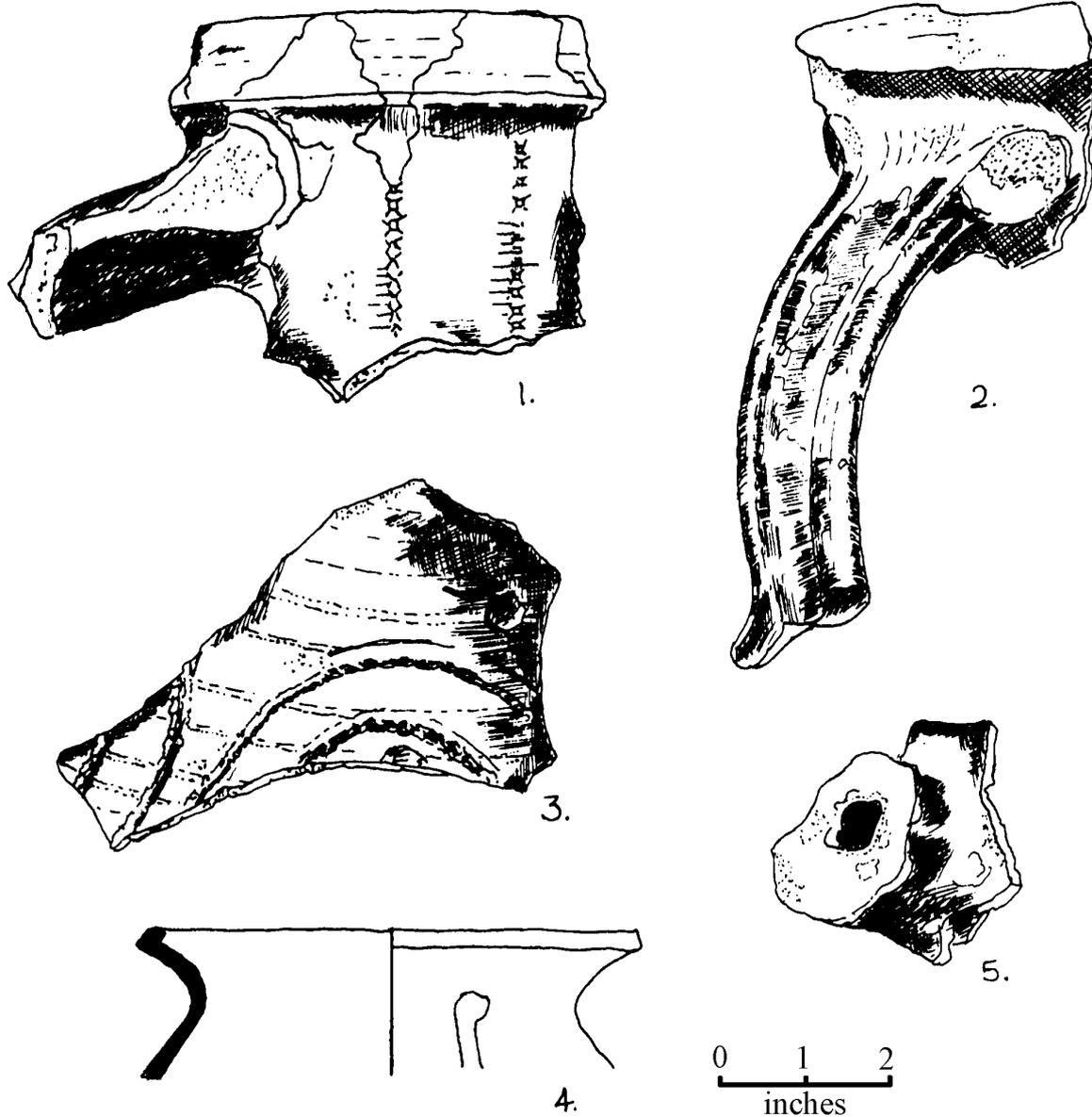


fig.1. Covehithe Suffolk
Late Medieval Pottery.

It seems that the pottery may be connected with a small fishing community, associated with the village of Covehithe. From records we learn that at the time of building the Church at Covehithe, there once lived over three hundred people, a vast difference to the present population at Covehithe. Evidence of stoneware was recovered quite close to the glazed jug neck and again this was quite sharp along its fractured sides. It was part of a narrow neck of two inch diameter, with the rounds on the outside made by the potter giving a simple decorated affect to the vessel. Several pieces of coarseware which were buff in colour were recovered all together along with a sizeable piece of green pitted glazeware. Examination of the former, showed much abrasion to both the edges as well as both faces. All the pieces belonged to the same pot and a large bung hole spot was found with shards. In trying to fit the pieces together, the problem of rolled edges is all too obvious, but from the results it showed a vessel

about eleven inches in diameter, with rolled strip ornamentation, along the top, and the same decoration used to form a squared pattern on the face of the pot. Later on, part of the rim and side of a small cooking pot had this simple strip decoration from the underside of the rim extending towards the base. This was repeated with another strip two inches away and so on around the container. Decoration on some of the pottery is most attractive by variation of types of glaze, and the use of small strips of clay employed in half-circles; and stepped, to add decoration to the design, metal dust applied to these features during glazing gives a very pleasing affect. The strong thumb prints where the handle joins the neck of the vessels, gives much character to the work, and it is noticeable that pie-crust work has been applied to the bottom of at least three types of pot with one being glazed.

Parts of the peat beds and shallow cliff near Benacre Broad, was subject to much upheaval during the years, and unfortunately there is still evidence of barbed wire and metal spikes etc., embedded amongst peat beds, which make up part of the wood at this point. Medieval finds have been observed up to the concrete blockhouse and within ten feet of this point, a sizable piece of lava millstone was found embedded in the peat. It had been badly rolled and was probably not found in its original position, but nevertheless it suggests that the remainder of the material may come to light before long.

Two pieces of wattle and daub were also found on peat a short distance away, but this time in removing one piece, it seems they were still in their place of origin from the marks on the underside of them. Of pottery found in this vicinity, one must assume that it has been redistributed as it is occasionally observed above barbed wire embedded in the ground, and usually it is heavily abraded, and in very brittle condition.

To ask how much more pottery will be uncovered from this particular area is hard to say, except that most of it is grouped in one area, so it is a fair assumption that more may lie beneath the remaining peat formations, which are now isolated on the beach surface and covered by a small layer of sand. Also the present shingle bank covers what was originally thought to be a pit, so it seems we have more to learn here for some time ahead, subject to sea change. With regard to the area of ploughland which terminates at the cliff, here I think is where additional finds will come though in what shape and form we cannot be sure. The line of cobbles mentioned earlier can be also observed on the ploughland though the plough has scattered them about, bricks with straw marks and rather twisted shape can sometimes be found on the beach beneath the cliff. Iron remains are also in evidence, though corrosion can be very misleading, in fact much of the iron remains coming off the top of the cliff, belong to either ploughs or attachments with the odd horseshoe for good measure. Nevertheless, it is a worthwhile exercise to keep watching an area which has over the last year, or more, provided the Society with a great deal of information as well as a great deal of archaeological remains.

In conclusion, I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to Mr. A. Brown of Pakefield, who has produced a vast number of items over the last year and who has been continually discovering fresh material from the area.

P.M.D. January 1976

THE MUSEUM SERVICE IN LOWESTOFT

Report prepared by a Joint Steering Committee of the Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History Society and the Lowestoft and East Suffolk Maritime Society for presentation to Waveney District Council.

Members of the Joint Steering Committee:-

Representing Archaeological Society:

Mrs. B.P. Preston, Mr.P.M. Durbridge and Mr. A.M. Turner

Representing Maritime Society :

Mr. R. French, Revd. H. Whyntie and Mr.W.Soloman

The Waveney District Council at a meeting on 23rd September 1974 adopting Minutes of its Recreation and Amenities Committee held on 11th September 1974, approved in principle the letting at a peppercorn rent of a site at the rear of Fisherman's Cottage, Sparrows Nest for a museum sponsored by the two societies. It was agreed that this approval in principle should provide the

opportunity for further discussions as to the type of building required and arrangements for staffing and for financing a scheme from national funds and public subscription.

Since September discussions have been arranged between Suffolk County Council and Suffolk District Councils on the Ipswich Borough Council consultation report entitled 'The Museum Service in Suffolk.' Waveney District Council has also completed arrangements with Suffolk County Council for its valuable collection of Lowestoft china and other items to be stored and exhibited at the new County Library in Lowestoft. This comprises 122 items in the general collection, 28 items in the de Winton donation, 12 items in the Capps donation and a further 12 items listed as individual donations. A collection of 174 pieces of Lowestoft China is no mean achievement and would form an important nucleus of any Museum in Lowestoft.

When the Library was planned, the library service was a borough council function and the library building was the first phase in the scheme for a Library, Museum and Art Gallery. This scheme has been overtaken by events in that the Library is now a county service, but the second phase could be undertaken either by the District Council or by the County Council or by both Authorities as a joint project. There is also the further possibility that phase 2 of the original scheme may be abandoned.

It has always been the policy and hope of both societies that the exhibits they hold would form the nucleus of a local museum for Lowestoft. As Lowestoft is superseded by the larger district of Waveney, it is accepted that the exhibits of the two societies could appropriately be included in a district museum for Waveney.

The Societies would, however, have reservations about their exhibits being accommodated in a museum administered either by the county or by the district unless they had adequate representation on the responsible committees. They would reserve the right to withdraw their collections.

In the new County of Suffolk the three main centres of population are Ipswich, Bury St. Edmunds and Lowestoft.

At Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds the Borough Councils of Ipswich and St. Edmundsbury provide museum and fine art exhibitions and the steering committee feel that before commitments are entered into for amalgamating the housing of the collections of the two societies, consideration needs to be given to the future development of the Lowestoft collection at the Library.

If in the foreseeable future phase 2 of the 'Library' development is to be continued in its original or some modified form and it is anticipated that the collection of Lowestoft china will be housed there but remain in the control of the District Council, then consideration should be given to the exhibits of the two societies being included in the one central collection. In this event it would be premature to embark on expenditure for a Sparrows Nest project until the District Council has determined its future policy in relation to town centre project.

In the design of the new library, possible future development was provided for and a first floor bridge could be provided between the library and a second phase building spanning a passageway between. The bridge-way would cross the east part of the Old People's Club and would ideally involve the demolition of this building or modification of the roof or partial demolition might be possible but would be less satisfactory architecturally. A new building could incorporate facilities on the ground floor for elderly people and museum and/or art gallery on upper floors, with a lecture theatre, should it be necessary to utilise the area of the lecture theatre in the library building for book storage or other special library purpose.

If a scheme which affects the Old People's Club should prove to be unacceptable or too costly, a new building on the laundry site, which is owned by the County Council, would probably be adequate to provide a museum and art gallery but without any direct connection with the library building.

Provision of museums and art galleries is a function which may be exercised either by a County Council or by a District Council and the function could also be exercised by a joint scheme. It is understood that the County Council are seeking to establish a records office in Lowestoft and are also seeking involvement in the museum service, possibly developing an educational and advisory role so as not to conflict with the museums already established at district level at Ipswich and St. Edmundsbury. It is also known that the present curator of the Ipswich Museums, Miss P.M. Butler, is very anxious that a high standard museum, specialising in local subjects, i.e. Lowestoft china and maritime subjects, but also covering the full range of museum subjects, including natural history, should be established in Lowestoft. This is in line with modern museum thinking that major exhibits of specialised subjects should exist in the town or area of origin.

In view of the interest of the County Council, it appears to the two Societies that a joint scheme might be considered for Lowestoft on the basis of the County Council providing the buildings and an advisory service from the County Museums Service, the District Council providing the attendant staff and lending their collection of Lowestoft china and any other exhibits they might possess and the two societies providing their exhibits. The museum would be run by a management committee with representatives from the four bodies and any other interested society. The owner-ship of some of the exhibits would give the District Council an effective voice in their control and disposal, whilst the joint venture would give the County Council a centre for its advisory museum service and for its local records office. There could also be economies by combining the curator function with the county advisory function.

The purpose of this paper is to bring into perspective the future of a museum service in Lowestoft and the two societies acknowledge the help of Councillor Mrs. June Wren and the Chief Executive, Mr. P.A. Taylor, in supplying certain details necessary to prepare a meaningful report.

It is understood that the new Publicity Bureau cost about £20,000 so the same kind of construction for a museum would involve an expenditure of between £15,000 and £25,000 depending on size, fittings and inflation. It has also become apparent that if erected at the rear of the Fisherman's Cottage at Sparrows Nest, a building of this type would be clearly visible from the sea wall. The two societies also feel that an alternative to a new building on the laundry site would be the acquisition of a suitable building of historical and architectural interest.

Whilst the two societies would welcome a more permanent and satisfactory arrangement than exists at present, they feel that they must also bring the long term implications before the council for its consideration.

Pending a long term or short term solution, the two societies are facing increasing problems in providing necessary attendants to enable the exhibits to be viewed by the Public and in meeting their running costs.

The Maritime Society asked for the Council to consider a grant of £500 towards the cost of maintenance work on the Fisherman's Cottage at Sparrows Nest or for the Council to carry out the maintenance.

A similar grant of £500 is requested by the Archaeological Society towards the cost of works at the present premises in The Prairie towards:-

- (a) Toilet accommodation
- (b) Security provision
- (c) Opening second section of exhibition space.

These grants are related to works which need to be carried out, and apart from any further request from the Archaeological Society if it cannot complete the works within the provisional estimate, are not recurring.

If the Council could see its way to provide some contribution towards running costs, an annual sum of £250 for each society is suggested to provide remuneration for persons acting as attendants.

Annual assistance to Beccles Museum is £400 which is in respect of rent and rates and £438 for running expenses. The cost of furnishing and fittings was met by a block grant of £1,619 from Beccles Corporation immediately prior to re-organisation.

July 1975 Town Hall Lowestoft

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCHES OF SUFFOLK

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The key to the study of the Churches of any particular area is Geology, and that in Suffolk means the lack of good building stone. This leaves three main building materials, timber, brick and flint. Although so extensively used for medieval buildings, timber, apart of course, from the magnificent roofs, was rarely used structurally in Suffolk churches. We have nothing to compare with what our neighbour, Essex, has to show, the nave of split tree trunks at Greenstead, the wooden arcade at

Shenfield or the fine collection of timber towers round Chelmsford at, for example, Blackmore, Margaretting, Navestock and Stock. Brick didn't come into fairly general use for either churches or house until the 15th century and there again in Suffolk it was only used on a modest scale as in the occasional brick clerestory, for example at Hopton near Diss and Heveningham. We have nothing to equal such Essex churches as Chignal Smealy, East Horndon or Layer Marney which are entirely built of brick or the mellowed and impressive brick tower at Ingatestone. Again, while just over a hundred churches in Essex incorporate reused 'Roman' brick, there are only a handful of instances in Suffolk, such as the north-east and south-east corners of the chancel at Polstead. In passing one cannot help wondering whether some of these so called re-used 'Roman' bricks are not really native-made, contemporary brickwork. Why should such a simple art as brick making have died out in England for some 800 years after the end of the Roman occupation, while still being practised so extensively in Germany and the Low Countries? What we can be sure of is that the nave arcades at Polstead dating from about 1170 are the earliest use in England of native made bricks of medieval dimensions.

The most notable survival of late Saxon and Norman work in Suffolk are the round towers of which, according to Munro Cautley, Suffolk has 41, Norfolk 119 and Essex 8, to which may be added two in Cambridgeshire, both close to the Suffolk border. There are only five others in all England, three in the Ouse Valley in West Sussex and two in the Lambourn Valley in Berkshire. They date from about 950 to 1150. In Suffolk most occur in or near the river valleys towards the East Coast. There is a whole group just behind Lowestoft, including Belton, Blundeston, Fritton, Lound, Mutford and Herringfleet. The last is late Saxon as witness the triangular headed belfry windows. The geographical distribution led Munro Cautley to suggest they were originally isolated towers used for defence against the Vikings. But Cautley himself, in his 'Norfolk Churches' wrote that 'the majority . . . date from the Norman period,' which surely satisfies the defence theory, for the Viking raids were over well before the Conquest. Isn't it much more likely that they were built simply to avoid having corners which would mean importing stone, in all probability from the limestone quarries round Stanford, such as Barnack, Ketton and Clipsham? Transport could add more than 100% to the quarry face cost of stone. So dressed stone was used very sparingly, mainly for windows, doorways and arcades. So we are left with flint as the predominating building material for medieval churches in Suffolk. In Norman work, for example in the apse at Fritton, the flints were laid in rough layers as they were picked straight from the fields or shallow quarries with a liberal use of mortar. At a later date, for example in the 15th century, they were knapped to about the size of a child's brick or were incorporated into walls with the minimum use of mortar. Walls built entirely of flint can be rather monotonous and so in late medieval work, at a time when Suffolk was a very wealthy area, flushwork was used. This consisted of knapped flints laid in stone panelling, about two-thirds flint and one third stone. Aesthetically this is a great improvement as you can see at Lowestoft or Southwold or Long Melford or many a clerestory added when the nave was heightened as at Bacton.

Early Gothic work is comparatively rare in Suffolk. Early English work occurs in the towns at Bures, Clare and Rumburgh, early decorated tracery (very interesting though much renewed) in the windows of the south aisle at Rickinghall Inferior, in the chancel at that most interesting church at Redgrave and in the network tracery of the east window at Icklingham All Saints, a fascinating church just north-west of Bury St. Edmunds, and which is now receiving careful and conservative restoration. But of course the great period of church building (or, more often, re-building) in Suffolk was the two centuries immediately before the Reformation, from about 1340 to 1540, when East Anglia was so wealthy as a result of the development of the cloth industry and trade with the Continent, when it was the most thickly populated part of England outside London and when, for a time, Norwich was only second in population to the Metropolis. These churches were built in the Perpendicular style, that national style found nowhere abroad, not even in the then separate Kingdom of Scotland, and one of those founts of origin was at Gloucester Abbey (since the Reformation Gloucester Cathedral) where Perpendicular work in the transepts and the chancel date from about 1327-50. At Long Melford we can date much of the church by inscriptions round the parapet. Thus we know that the last part to be built was the Lady-Chapel dated 1496, very unusual in that it consists of an ambulatory or passage way round a large central space. Was this to house a relic? But there is no record of such at Long Melford.

Let us now look in some little detail at the outside of Lavenham Church. If you take your stand in the south-east corner of the churchyard, you can get a good overall view. Here the earlier chancel of about 1300-1330 survives as witness its steeply pitched roof and the tracery of the east and south windows and of the chancel screen. But the rest is all Perpendicular, and though doubtless practically

everybody helped with gifts of money or in kind or actual labour, the two families who above all others financed the rebuilding were, on the one hand, the De Veres, Earls of Oxford and Lords of the Manor, typical members of the medieval baronial class, and, on the other hand, the Spring family who typified the wealthy new capitalist clothiers. By this date a great deal of useful information can be obtained from wills, a source which is being used more and more. Now look at that splendid tower. You can easily detect where, about half-way up, the texture of the walls becomes rougher and wills prove that the tower was built in two stages, probably at the rate of about ten feet a summer. The lower half dates from about 1486-1493 while work on the upper half commenced about 1523 when Thomas Spring III left £200 to the "Fynishing of the stepyl". You will notice the stone mullets or five pointed stars, a badge of the De Veres, let into the flintwork of the tower. Round the base you will again find the mullet as well as the merchant's mark of the Springs, but by the time they had reached the top of the tower, Thomas Spring III had been knighted and he proudly displayed his new coat-of-arms thirty two times. They also proudly displayed it on the south chapel, which an inscription on the parapet tells us was built by Thomas Spring III and his wife Alice in 1525. The top of the tower was never finished. Presumably the Reformation intervened while work was still in progress. Now look at the south side of the body of the Church. Most unusually it is entirely built of freestone. This must have added very much to the cost as the stone had to come from one of the quarries near Stafford (probably Casterton in this case) down the river to the Wash, right round the coast of Norfolk and Suffolk, and up the Stour to Sudbury or Long Melford (probably the former), then the last four or five miles overland. You will notice the modern figures of St. Peter and St. Paul (Patron Saints of the Church) in the niche in the south porch which show how difficult it is to set modern figures, however good they may be in isolation, in a medieval setting. Either side of these figures are six coats-of-arms showing some of the families the De Veres married into. Below, in the spandrels of the arch, are two animals which you must take my word for it are meant to be boars or wild pigs, the Latin for which is 'verres' so forming a rebus or pun on the name De Vere.

I won't take you inside because I don't want Lavenham Church to monopolise the limited space at my disposal. Let us now look at a very different sort of church, that of Westhall, in a remote situation in the country behind Southwold. What is now the south aisle was the nave of the original Norman Church whose west front you can still see if you step inside the tower which was built in the 13th century, more or less at the same time that a wide north aisle was added. Then, in the 14th century, the old Norman apsidal chancel was pulled down, the chancel to the east of the north aisle (which now becomes the nave) was built with its lovely windows still retaining a little of the original glass, and the arcade was rebuilt. In the 15th century, new and larger windows were inserted in the aisle and nave, and the north porch was built, the last addition before the Reformation put a stop to further building. There are traces of wall paintings (not frescoes, a treatment almost unknown in Medieval England), including a large Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travellers, and wherever possible placed opposite the main doorway. The front showing the Seven Sacraments is of a type found only in East Anglia, apart from solitary examples at Farningham (Kent) and Nettlecombe (Somerset). The eighth panel generally showed the Crucifixion, though at Westhall and at Badingham it depicts the Baptism of Christ. The font at Badingham is almost perfectly preserved. That at Westhall has been badly mutilated though such details as survive, with touches of colour here and there, show how beautiful it must originally have been. The base of the rood screen survives with painted panels, three uniquely depicting the three central figures at the Transfiguration. At Bramfield the 15th century screen survives complete up to and including the vaulted base of the rood loft platform but no medieval rood loft survives in Suffolk, though the lofts of the parclose or chantry chapel screens survive at Dennington. But if you go to Eye Church you will see a 15th century screen with loft and rood added in the 1920's by the late Sir Ninian Comper, who did so much to bring back light and colour to some of our Medieval churches. You can see other Comper work in the organ case, font cover, St. Christopher wall painting and screenwork which has beautifully transformed the otherwise undistinguished interior of the church at Lound. The altar and font cover at Lowestoft are also by Comper.

If you are going round the churches of a particular locality it is always interesting to lookout for local features. Thus, many of the churches in the Lowestoft district have banner stave lockers, tall and narrow cupboards in the walls where the poles used for carrying banners in procession were stored when not in use. They are found at Lowestoft itself, as well as at Henstead, Shadingfield, South Cove, Sotterley, Wenhaston and elsewhere but very rarely outside the Lowestoft area, though there are two in Chelmsford Cathedral. Only Barnby retains its original door. Then there are the piscinas, the drain

on the south side of the sanctuary, into which the rinsings from the chalice were poured. Normally, the recess containing the piscina only has an opening facing north towards the altar, but in church after church in East Anglia they also have an opening facing west. Then fairly often the priest's door into the chancel is below the buttress as at Blythburgh (both north and south), a feature rarely found outside East Anglia. Often, too, there is a relieving arch in brick above a Perpendicular window, adding a pleasant touch of colour to the flint walls, as at Blythburgh and Eye.

Finally, in this rather haphazard and all too brief summary of our Suffolk Churches, let us look at a few more churches not too far from Lowestoft and first Wenhaston. Above the chancel arch there was almost invariably a painting of the Doom, with Christ in Majesty, often seated on a rainbow in the centre, with the Saved entering a 15th century castellated gateway into Heaven on the left, and the Damned being carted off to Hell's Mouth on the right. I always think the medieval artist must have got far more fun in painting Hell rather than Heaven. The former gave him so much more scope for his often vivid imagination. At Wenhaston there apparently was not room above the medieval chancel arch for such a painting, so into the arch itself was fitted a wooden tympanum on which was painted the Doom. At the Reformation this was whitewashed over and replaced by the Royal Arms. Then came the inevitable Victorian restoration, in this case in 1892 when the tympanum was taken down and put in the churchyard, as so much lumber, to be disposed of on the morrow. But a heavy downpour of rain washed off some of the whitewash, revealing traces of colour and it is to the credit of the then Church Authorities that careful cleaning took place and the Doom was set up in the north aisle, where it still is. You will notice slots into which were fixed the wooden figures in relief of the Crucified Christ, the Virgin Mary and St. John. They, of course, no longer exist. Two or three years ago, with the help of a Pilgrim Trust grant, it was expertly treated and is now remarkably clear. The gist of the inscription below is 'Obey those who are put in authority'. This is post-Reformation, and refers to the Royal Arms mentioned above. There are only two other examples surviving of Doom paintings on wooden tympanum, at Penn in Buckinghamshire and Dauntsey in Wiltshire, though there is one painted on canvas at Ludham in Norfolk. Wall paintings of the Doom are fairly common and occur in Suffolk at Bacton, also recently treated with the help of a Pilgrim Trust grant, and at Stoke-by-Clare, where unusually it is at the east end of the north aisle and obviously served as the reredos to a side altar.

Even when a rood screen may have been completely destroyed the rood loft staircase may survive in the thickness of the north or south wall, as at Wissett. At South Cove the lower door painted with St. Michael is probably a unique survival.

Benacre Church was described by Munro Cautley as 'terribly restored and has nothing of interest but a typical 13th century font bowl with shallowly recessed arches, the Arms of King George II and late box pews'. The first edition of Cautley's 'Suffolk Churches' appeared nearly 40 years ago, in 1937, and his outlook was very largely medieval. Today, most of us would think Benacre an altogether delightful little church, showing how sympathetically 18th and 19th century additions and modifications could be made to a medieval church. I for one never travel along the road between Lowestoft and Blythburgh without turning aside to look at Benacre Church if I can possibly spare the time.

In these few pages I have picked out at more or less random a few features of our Suffolk churches. I have said nothing of the bench ends, such a collection as one can see at Bythburgh which include some of the Vices; Sloth still in bed, Hypocrisy looking through her fingers while pretending to pray, Gluttony with an unhealthily fat stomach and so on. We all know the great churches of Blythburgh and Southwold, Lowestoft, Long Melford and Lavenham, but there is also a wealth of interest in the smaller churches, often tucked away in remote sites like Gipping or Westhall or with a wonderful collection of monuments as at Saxted, Helmingham and Kedington. Or again, there are the charmingly unrestored interiors at Cretingham and Witharsdale with nice box pews, or Dennington and Hessett which have something of almost everything in them. There are nearly 500 churches in Suffolk, the great majority of pre-Reformation. Rarely do you enter an old Suffolk Church and come out again completely unsatisfied.
