

# BLYTHBURGH

## FOCUS

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Issue No 64

<http://blythburgh.onesuffolk.net>

Aug/Sept 2022

## BLYTHBURGH PLAY SITE: DID YOU KNOW?



The Blythburgh Play Site, which is situated at Highfields, was taken over from the Suffolk Heritage Housing Association by the Parish Council in 1996.

Significant improvements were carried out in 1998 with support from a number of bodies: Suffolk Coastal District Council, Rural Development Commission, Adnams Brewery, Sole Bay Lions, East Anglian Daily Times, Bernard Matthews, Suffolk Waste Management and Wyevale Centre.

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This photograph shows the play site being opened on 27 June 1998 by Mr David Lurkins, President of Sole Bay Lions. Shown in the picture (left to right) are Blythburgh Parish Council Clerk George Newson, Blythburgh Parish Council Chairman Tom Lond-Caulk, Councillor Ray St Clair Brown, Mrs Lurkins, Bernard Seagrave-Daly representing Adnams Brewery, and Mr David Lurkins.

Around 2010, the Parish Council canvassed local residents to allow residents and their children to have a say in the proposal to upgrade the play site equipment – something that was now needed as the

play equipment was dated and in need of work.

As a result, under the Chairmanship of David Tytler, the Parish Council led efforts for a £16,000 upgrade of the play site equipment. A £10,000 grant was secured from the BIG Lottery Fund, and the overall total was reached with grants from the Blythburgh Latitude Trust, Suffolk Coastal District Council and County Councillor Rae Leighton's locality budget.

The refurbished play site and new equipment was officially opened in July 2012. On this occasion, parishioners both young and old gathered to enjoy a "playsite picnic" and try out the new play equipment. You could say that proceedings got off to a "flying start" as David Tytler had persuaded a number of Ipswich Sacker Witches speedway stars to come along to help with the official opening. Rider Rohan Tungate, of the Ipswich Sacker Witches, and speedway legend John "Tiger" Louis kept the youngsters (and if truth be told a number of us rather older residents who remembered "Tiger" Louis from his world championship days) busy by letting them sit on the racing bikes.

Unusually, the occasion also attracted representatives of all four levels of government: David Tytler, Chairman of Blythburgh Parish Council; Suffolk Coastal Councillor Michael Gower; Suffolk County Councillor Rae Leighton, and Suffolk Coastal MP Therese Coffey.

This event attracted good media coverage and you will see from the photographs here, that the rain held off and a good time was had by all.

**Sonia Boggis**

*Note from the Parish Council: We are currently looking into quotes and grants to upgrade the play site equipment and introduce some keep fit equipment.*

### BLYTHBURGH DAY TAKE TWO: SUNDAY 18 SEPTEMBER

Unfortunately, Blythburgh Day, due for 31 July, was unavoidably postponed but the good news is that it will now take place on **Sunday 18 September**.

As normal, it will take place in the gardens of *The Priory*. Entrance to the gardens will be via the garden gates to the left of the Village Hall. Signs will point you in the right direction.

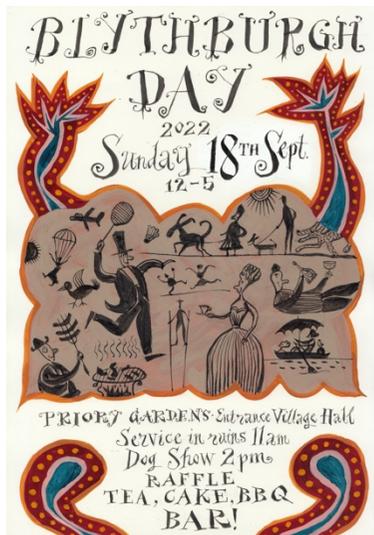
In tune with the September date, this year's Blythburgh Day will have a **Harvest theme**. The launch open air service in the Priory ruins will take a Harvest Festival form and – whether you decide to come to the service or not – we're asking people to **bring contributions to support the Lowestoft Food Bank** (which has a branch in Saxmundham that serves a large rural area around us), since the service it provides is increasingly important at the moment.

**11am:** The day starts with an open-air service in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Priory ruins.

**12pm:** the festivities begin

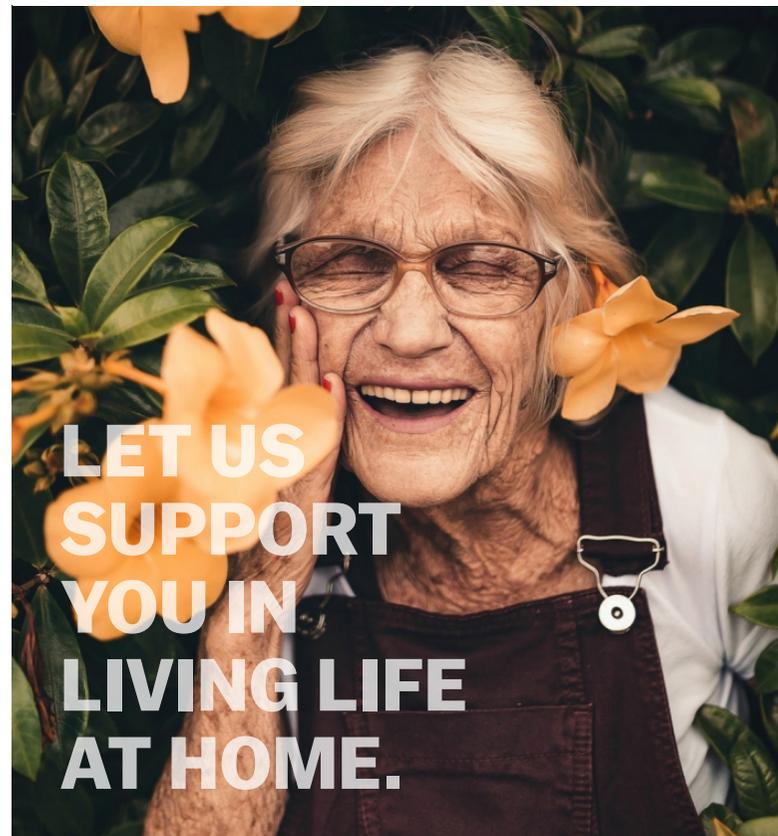
During the day the following will be available:

- Bar
- Tea and Coffee
- Cakes
- BBQ – burgers or sausages (for a free meal, please bring the voucher printed at the end of the Focus)
- Raffle
- Fun Dog Show
- Music
- Children's Games
- Horticultural Society Plant Stall
- Guided Tour of ruins
- Stall by Blythburgh Railway Shed - including tours of the Shed



**5pm:** The day ends

We recommend signing up for the Blythburgh Matters email service which tells you about local events and news as they happen, any updates on Blythburgh Day will be notified here – email [blythburghmatters@gmail.com](mailto:blythburghmatters@gmail.com) to get on the mailing list



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**THE STORY OF AN AXE**

I, along with others, was recently given the opportunity to handle a Bronze Age axe head that had lain in a Bulcamp field for over 3,000 years. This was at a presentation by Simon Roberts from Union Farm given at Blythburgh Church. It made me wonder what the valley was like in the Bronze Age – from roughly 2,500 BC to 700 BC.

Work done in 2014 during the improvement of the A12 flood defences provides some clues. Ten boreholes were sunk across the valley in a narrow strip west of the road. The recovered material was analysed and dated. The profile of the original valley was quite different from the level flood plain we know today. At the Bulcamp end the original level was 2.9 m. below today's. The valley sloped gradually southwards on a sandy, gravelly base, before plunging into a deep river course, 6.6 m. (nearly 22 feet) below today's ground level. The valley would have been steep-sided at the southern end – a two-storey house dropped into it would have disappeared.

The Blyth has flowed eastwards since the formation of the southern North Sea when the last of Doggerland flooded about 10,000 years ago. The valley began to fill with peat and silt in about 6,500 BC. Today's level was reached sometime after the 7<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century – the Anglo-Saxon founders of Blythburgh could have seen a valley close to today's profile.

During the early and middle Bronze Age, with rising sea-levels, fresh water backed-up, the water table rose, and floodwater and marshland environments expanded. Archaeology has demonstrated a high intensity of settlement in this period. There was an early Bronze Age settlement at Henham quarry for example, with a cluster of pits and burials.



Bulcamp Bronze Age axe head

The borehole survey shows little evidence of human activity in the lower part of the sequence when the floodplain was dominated by alder carr (waterlogged wooded terrain populated with alder trees).

Traces of tree pollen such as oak and Scots pine suggest these were growing on the dryland beyond the floodplain edge. There is no evidence of woodland clearance or cultivation in the pollen record, but the presence of charcoal might suggest human activity, or natural forest fires.

There was enriched ground within the floodplain, caused perhaps by the presence of large herbivores, whether wild or domesticated.

Was the marshland used for grazing from a very early date? There is evidence of woodland clearance late in the sequence but probably not complete by Anglo-Saxon times. Cereal type grains appear in the uppermost layers but they may have been washed rather than blown onto the sampling site.

The Bronze Age saw the migration of new people from Europe. As the climate became wetter the population moved into the fertile valleys and large livestock farms developed. The axe head may have been a sign of wealth, or used as currency, rather than as a tool. Although much is uncertain, we can be sure that the Blyth valley has been inhabited and exploited by humans for thousands of years.

**Alan Mackley**

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SOLICITORS & NOTARIES

## Blythburgh Church



### In-spired knitting!

Blythburgh's mystery guerrilla knitter has struck again with this delightful rendition of Holy Trinity on the top of the post box on Dunwich Road. Thank you.

### Animal magic

Blythburgh Church's ever popular **Blessing of the Animals Service** is due to take place at **11am on Sunday 21 August**. In the recent past we have had eager ferrets, scurrying voles, modest woodlice, ancient tortoises, a devout praying mantis, diminutive ponies and huge horses – but all creatures great and small are more than welcome.

### Take a break

Please join us for coffee and cake at Blythburgh's gathering place – the monthly **café and mini-market: 10.30-12pm on Friday 26 August and Friday 30 September**.

### Czech Choir returns

We're pleased to welcome back the Bohemian Choir from the University of Liberec in the Czech Republic, who were last here in 2019. They will be performing music from Suffolk and Bohemia on Thursday 15 September at 12.30pm.

### Harvest Festival

Blythburgh Church's Harvest Festival, which was due to take place on **Sunday 18 September**, will now form part of the Blythburgh Day celebrations in the Priory at **11am** on the same day (see page 3).

## KEEP A LOOK OUT – PUBLIC MEETING 8<sup>th</sup> AUGUST OPTIONS FOR ANGEL LANE/DUNWICH ROAD

All households that are registered on the electoral roll will be receiving information about discussions being held in relation to changes to the road layout in Angel Lane/ Dunwich Road aimed at managing traffic. These are suggestions only and follow on from the approval of the Sizewell C project. The Parish Council is looking to feed the views of the Parish electorate back to the working group that is currently studying the options. A public meeting will be held in the Village Hall on 8<sup>th</sup> August at 7pm to discuss the matter.

*If your household is on the electoral register and you have not received a letter, please email [roderick@millend6.plus.com](mailto:roderick@millend6.plus.com).*

## BLYTHBURGH FIELD NOTES

Mid-June to August is the quiet time for birdwatchers, many of which now turn their interests to butterflies or dragonflies, especially now we have greatly reduced bird breeding. Since the 70s, we have lost numerous breeding bird species from the parish, many of which are significant species, such as Red-backed Shrike and Hawfinch, while other losses include Snipe, Nightjar, Whinchat, Redstart, Tree Pipit and Willow Tit (a species which excavates its own nest hole in soft rotting trees such as Alder). Sadly, our last pair of breeding Wheatear near New Delight lost their young due to a picnicing family stuffing plastic bags down the rabbit hole they were nesting in, suffocating the young.

A number of additional species were lost due to the 1987 storm, including Long-eared Owl, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Nuthatch. The following woodland clearance, created habitat which allowed the numbers of Woodlark to increase.

Among several spasmodic breeders during the period were Spotted Crake, Savi's Warbler and Wood Warbler – all of which have not been present in recent years. Our most recent losses appear to be Turtle Dove and Spotted Flycatcher, while the numbers of several other species have drastically declined.

Two of the more interesting butterfly species have appeared and increased in recent years around the Fen Covert area, Silver-washed Fritillary and White Admiral.

Very few migrant bird species have been seen during this quiet period, but an Osprey has been present on the Blyth Estuary since 12 July.

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## STARRY, STARRY NIGHT

On these summer evenings the sky doesn't start to get dark until around 10pm. Among the first stars to become visible are those that make up the Summer Triangle.

Look high to the south-east and you will see a bright blue-white star called Vega. To the left of Vega is Deneb, and about half way down towards the horizon you'll find Altair. They are quite well spread out. As a guide if you hold a 12-inch ruler at arm's length it will roughly fill the gap between Vega and Altair.

All three of these stars are in different constellations. Vega is in Lyra (The Harp), Deneb is part of Cygnus (The Swan), and Altair is in Aquila (The Eagle). Each is the brightest star in their constellation.

Although they all appear to be bright in our sky, they illustrate how the stars we see vary.

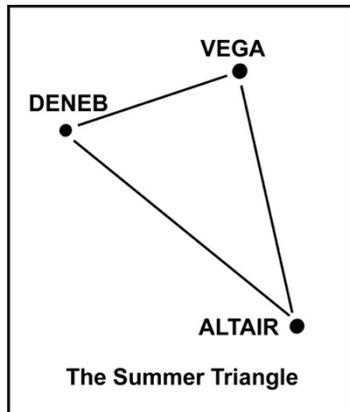
Vega appears to be the brightest of the three. It is 25 light-years from us, meaning that its light takes 25 years to reach us. It is 2.5 times larger than the sun, but shines 50 times brighter. As a result it uses up its energy faster and will have a life span of only about a tenth of the sun.

The second brightest star, as seen by us, is Altair. This is closer than Vega at only 17 light-years, and is larger and brighter than the sun, but smaller and dimmer than Vega. Altair spins so fast on its axis that it is not spherical but instead is flattened at the poles.

However, the real 'star' of the Summer Triangle is Deneb. Although it appears to be the faintest of the three, don't be fooled. Deneb is over 200 times the size of the sun and it is anything up to 196,000 times brighter. It only appears to be the faintest of the three because it's much more distant. In fact, its brightness makes it difficult to measure its distance from us, even using modern methods, but a probable best estimate is around 2,600 light-years. That means that we are seeing Deneb as it was about 600 BC, when Britain was in the early part of the Iron Age.

When looking at Deneb, it's worth considering that its brightness makes it the most distant star that you're able to see with the naked eye.

**Colin Huggins**



## LATITUDE TRAFFIC REPORT

Latitude has been and gone again and, from the traffic point of view, has disturbed us far less than in some previous years. Thursday 21 July is usually the busiest traffic day of the festival but even so there were no major hold ups. On the previous Thursday, the total number of vehicles travelling north on the A12 through the village was 5,687 at average speeds of 26 to 28 mph. This is typical for this time of year.

On Latitude Thursday the total was 9,505, an increase of 3,818 or 67%. Despite this massive increase average speeds never dropped below 22mph (between 11:00 and midday) and for most of the day were between 25 and 26 mph. The busiest period was between 3:00 and 4:00 in the afternoon when 810 vehicles passed through at an average of 25mph. That is 13.5 vehicles a minute or one every 4.5 seconds!

On Friday 22nd the total number of vehicles was 8,532 an increase of only 1,765 or 26% and average speeds were normal (26 to 28 mph) apart from early afternoon when they dropped to 22mph. Saturday also saw an increase of 26% and Sunday 16% but on neither day were traffic speeds affected.

By all accounts Monday's traffic was the worst – with one resident reporting that it took them an hour and a half to get back from Reydon. I can offer no comment on Monday's exodus as I wasn't able to reach the recording device because of the resultant snarl-up!

**Roderick Orr-Ewing**

## WILDWATCH

Rural life certainly has its charms; green acres and wide open skies. Blythburgh offers all of these, but they're also often accompanied by something the holiday brochures don't mention – a variety of bucolic smells.

Agriculture provides us with the food on our tables, and we'd all prefer farmers to apply natural organic matter to the land. We'd also rather see livestock fatten on open fields rather than in intensive rearing sheds.

The human nose can detect a wide range of pongs. We can distinguish scents sufficiently to keep us safe and avoid getting food-poisoning or worse. There are, however, other animals that put us to shame when it comes to the Olfactory Olympics.

Birds, with very few exceptions, don't have a good sense of smell. It's their vision that sets them apart from the rest of us. Our fellow primates are similarly disadvantaged. Monkeys and apes have good colour vision but barely sense smell better than us. The prosimians, however – lemurs and bush babies in the tropics – rely on their sense of smell far more. The evidence is in their use of scent marking and their wet noses.



Dogs also have wet noses, and this gives away the fact that they also have a far superior sense of smell than many other animals. Not all dogs are equal, however, and bloodhounds have noses at least one-hundred-million times more sensitive than a human's. Even then, they are out-smelt by bears, which have a sense up to seven-times better than a bloodhound.

Scent is used by many creatures for finding – and distinguishing – potential partners. Insects use pheromones to both send messages to, and detect those from, other members of their species. These odours can also say whether the sender has been attacked, found a source of food or is ready to mate.

Even plants use smell to communicate. A parasitic plant like yellow rattle uses it to detect a nearby victim, while others can sense a browser approaching and warn others to load their stems and leaves with toxins.

The most sensitive animal smell receptors must be possessed by some fish, especially salmon. From hundreds of miles out at sea, it seems they can detect the very river or stream in which they were hatched from eggs some two, three or even four years before. It's there they themselves head to spawn.

Food for thought, perhaps, when you're next at the fishmongers?

**Paul Lacey**

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**STILL GROWING!**

Since our last bulletin we had a marvellous afternoon for the Horticultural Society summer garden party on 18 June despite a brief shower of rain. We all enjoyed lots of wonderful food and drinks in the beautiful surroundings of Colin and Mary's garden – thanks once again to them for opening up their garden to Hort Soc members.

We finally made it to the East Ruston Old Vicarage Garden on 20 July (originally arranged for May but rained off). So, a group of us ignored the weather forecast for thunderstorms and spent a wonderful afternoon browsing these absolutely marvellous gardens. The forecast was incorrect and it was a warm sunny afternoon to wander around this beautiful, 32-acre modern garden containing many garden rooms with herbaceous borders, gravel gardens, sub-tropical gardens, a box parterre, sunken rose garden, Mediterranean garden, Desert Wash and a large woodland garden.

Our next event is the Horticultural Society summer show to be held in the Holy Trinity Church on Saturday 6 August. Programmes and entry forms have been distributed to members – this event is open to non-members so anyone who would like a programme and entry form please get in touch.

If you'd like to join the Horticultural Society, please get in touch with me (details below), membership is a bargain at £5 a year!

**Val Carse**

Chair, Blythburgh Horticultural Society  
valc@btinternet.com

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**Horticultural Society**  
Val Carse 07973 389898

**Blythburgh Matters**  
Ro Williams 01502 478484

**Blyth Belles**  
Sarah Wickham blythbelles@gmail.com

## DAISY BANK CVI

Have you ever had a couple of days where things go wrong? It's Saturday night and I'm brushing my teeth before going to bed. I drop a glass tumbler that I'm using and it explodes into thousands of tiny shards. The bottom of the sink looks as though I've poured crushed ice into it. And it's all over the floor, and shelves, even on the landing. I'm barefoot and, of course, Milo our Siamese who sleeps with us is also unclad paw wise. So, it's downstairs to find my ubiquitous Crocs and back up with hoover and brush and pan. Half an hour later the final shard was disposed of, and I made it to bed.

It's Sunday, and we're sitting in the back garden enjoying the wonderful sun. There's a crack almost like a bomb going off. I rush round to the front of the house, and a tree branch has ripped the electricity bracket off the wall and the wire is laying in disarray on the front lawn. Emergency call to EDF: several hours later 'they' arrive and a couple of hours later, we're back in business.

Monday, I phone my friend in Bristol. I put the phone down and pick it up again to make another call, there's no dialling tone. Assuming my friend hasn't cancelled the call and the line is still open, I Facetime his son-in-law in Bath, email his wife (probably at work in Oxford or Reading), and finally a friend who lives in the same village: "Can you go and see him, and tell him to turn his phone off please?" He does, and there is nothing wrong. The fault is my end. Two hours on a chatline, whatever that is, and the fault will be fixed within four days. Is there something about these things happening in threes? In the end, I come down the following morning and all is back to normal so maybe somebody up there is looking out for us after all.

For the last 35 years, I've been writing a letter to all our friends, sometimes bi-monthly, and sometimes monthly. It's not meant to be one of those of those ghastly 'round robin' letters, containing information about relatives or people you don't know, and will never meet, but rather a series of anecdotes similar to the above. Recently I went through a period of wondering whether I should carry on or not. I started writing them when, years ago, I'd fallen on financially hard times, and decided to send letters rather than make expensive phone calls. Now of course, it's mostly emails, apart from four die-hard anti-cybers, so, they still get letters.

But I've decided to continue; and all because of Her Majesty sitting in my neighbour's front garden which came about as a result of the Jubilee scarecrow competition. I just had to pass a picture of her on to the 60-odd people, some of whom live all over the world. Sue next door is very clever artistically, besides being a wonderful gardener, and that particular picture needed to have a bigger audience. So there.

**Paul Bennett**

## THE WICKHAMS DO LATITUDE

To be honest we were both over-excited with the line-up for 2022. But that's the beauty of a festival – you end up seeing new acts and experiences. As we approached the entrance, it welcomed us like a sandstorm. People were wearing masks, not for covid but to protect from themselves from the dust.

Friday evening, we watched Maggie Rogers, an American singer songwriter, followed by Lewis Capaldi. With his powerful voice, he entertained the crowd and joked around – not sure his language was that family friendly, but amusing! He finished off with a firework display coming off the roof of the Obelisk stage.

Saturday, we spent most of the afternoon in the comedy tent; some great acts and packed out! Frankie Boyle did his usual controversial stuff – I am sure he does it for the reaction! Judi Love was hilarious, along with Rachel Parris who sang comedy songs. In the evening we were entertained by Example who just got the whole arena jumping around to lots of cover songs!

Sunday, I booked a new experience – we had lunch in the Guest Chef Tent. Today's food was courtesy of the TV shepherdess Amanda Owen. She spoke to the diners of the choice of menu: tomato, spinach, chilli Panzanella, followed by roasted lamb shoulder and a delightful summer berry Pavlova. At £55 a head, it was a little pricey but a great experience, sitting on trestles chatting to other festival goers. We then slowly made our way up the hill to the main arena, feeling completely stuffed. Then we came across the Oxygen Bar, "Party for longer" it advertised. After our five minutes of pure oxygen, we certainly did feel refreshed!

In the evening, we watch Manic Street Preachers and Snow Patrol. The crowd sang Happy Birthday to the Snow Patrol bass guitarist, who had co-written the next song with . . . Ed Sheeran! To a huge roar from the crowd, Ed himself bounced on to the stage! Just fantastic.

Thank you Latitude – see you in 2023

**Sarah Wickham**

### **BBQ VOUCHER – BLYTHBURGH DAY 2022**

Please present this voucher to the BBQ stand at Blythburgh Day to claim your free burger or hot dog. The voucher entitles each member of a Blythburgh household to one free burger or hot dog.

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**Number of residents:**.....