

BLYTHBURGH

FOCUS

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Issue No 68

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Apr/May 2023

BLYTHBURGH CORONATION BIG LUNCH

Blythburgh is holding a community picnic to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles and Queen Consort Camilla on **Sunday 7 May**. Chiara and Matthew Saunders will be opening their garden at the Priory (the same venue as for Blythburgh Day) from **12-5pm**. Admission is free, and the afternoon will take a similar shape to the Jubilee picnic that was held last June. Access is via the Village Hall car park.

You are invited to bring your own picnic and join with your neighbours for this festive occasion. Free tea, coffee and soft drinks will be provided, and there will be a cash bar. There'll also be a raffle, games, live music and a fun dog show.

At 4pm, everyone will be offered a slice of Coronation Cake and a glass of fizz to make a loyal toast to the royal couple. This will be followed by the raffle prize-giving.

The Blythburgh Coronation Big Lunch replaces our usual summer Blythburgh Day which will not take place this year.

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GUIDES NEED GUIDES

Did you know that Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK?

At the moment, we have Rainbows (5-7 year olds), Brownies (7-10 year olds) and Guides (10-14 year olds) based in Southwold, but taking girls from across our area. I have been running 1st Southwold Guides since I moved to Blythburgh, and it's been enormously rewarding and a whole lot of fun. However, all good things come to an end: I've decided to hang up my woggle this summer! Our assistant leader will be giving up at the same time.

We would like to find two women – or preferably three – who would be prepared to take over the unit. Full training is given, and I'll be happy to work with whoever comes forward until they complete it. It really is great fun, the girls are lovely (most of the time!), you can feel you are really making a difference, and it can be a useful thing to have on your CV too. Could this be you?

if you'd like to have a chat about it just let me know. Please feel free to pass the message on to anyone else who you think might be interested – you don't have to have been a Guide yourself to become a leader.

Jenny Allen

jennyanddick@aol.com

LATITUDE FESTIVAL TICKETS

This year, application forms for residents' tickets for the Latitude Festival are being distributed by hand separately from *Blythburgh Focus*. If you have not received your form together with information on the allocation process before **Friday 14 April**, then please contact the Administrator:
blythburgh.tickets.2023@btinternet.com.

BLYTHBURGH UNDER FIRE

It's always pleasing to read about youngsters doing well, and doubly so where there is a local connection. Let me explain. In 2011, our local historian Alan Mackley and I hosted a 'Blythburgh Remembered' event entitled "Growing up in the Village". We used photographs, recordings and a live interview to paint a picture of what it was like growing up in Blythburgh in the first half of the 20th century.

Our live interview was with Anita Barbrook (nee Kett), grandmother of Fynley and Harry Barbrook who have just been awarded their first professional football contracts with Ipswich Town – a huge step in any young footballer's life.

Anita was born in Toby's Cottages in 1936. Much has changed in Blythburgh since we last heard Anita's words about growing up in the village during WWII but her words, reproduced below, resonate across the years as a reminder of different times.

"The sky at night was very active as the search lights would sweep across and search for the enemy aircraft. One day I remember seeing bombs dropping from a plane which was on its way home to Germany. This was in the direction of Toby's Barn, just a short distance from Toby's Cottages which was where we lived. We were told afterwards they were trying to bomb the A12 but missed and bombed the fields instead.



"Another day, when I was in our garden, I observed a plane flying very low and close by me. It went over the sand quarry which was at the back of our house. To my amazement it started machine gunning at men who were working on the cranes. Thankfully, no one was injured, but I was really scared. I wondered if the plane was going to turn round and come back and shoot at me. Fortunately it didn't.

"Something that sticks in my mind was the sight of an American plane falling from the sky. It came down on heathland this side of Walberswick. It was on fire as it dropped from the sky. That was a terrible sight. I remember Mrs Critten

from Southwold driving her ambulance really fast to the scene. I was standing at the crossroads by the watertower.

"The premises next to us were used as an army billet; the soldiers were very friendly and very active, coming and going day and night. We had no shelter, so when the siren went off, we climbed under our very solid dining room table and hoped for the best. The daily newspaper and radio were a must in these very worrying times. My sister Pat and I did get very frightened at times at what was happening around us.

"My Dad (Tom Kett) joined the home guard and was out most nights on observation duties at Easton Bavents; they were looking out to sea to see if they could spot the enemy coming, but fortunately they didn't."

Sonia Boggis



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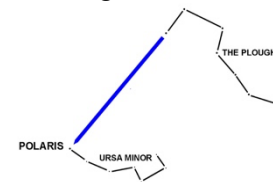
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STARRY, STARRY NIGHT

Our target this month can be seen on any clear night of the year. It's a circumpolar object, which means it is always above the horizon. In fact it's always in the same place in the sky.

Polaris is in the constellation of Ursa Minor (Little Bear). It's a star whose significance far outweighs its appearance as only the 48th brightest star in the sky. So why is it so important?

Cast your mind back to the days before GPS and Google Maps. Go even further back to medieval times, and you'll find the star being used for navigation purposes. This is because Polaris – also known as the Pole or North Star – is positioned almost exactly over the North Pole and therefore always appears due north in the sky. The elevation of Polaris also approximates to your latitude, so if you were at the North Pole it would be overhead, and if you were on the equator it would be on the horizon. Another useful navigational aid. So, if you are out at night and can find Polaris, then you are never entirely lost.



Star trails seen from Blythburgh

To find Polaris, look for the much more distinctive Ursa Major (Great Bear) or, as I know it, The Plough. At this time of year it will be high in the sky. Follow a line from the edge of The Plough and it will lead you to Polaris. It will appear as a single star although it's actually a system of three stars orbiting around each other.

During the course of a night, all of the stars in the sky appear to revolve around Polaris. It is of course the Earth that is rotating, not the stars. If you take a long exposure photograph this becomes very obvious, with Polaris being the star at the centre of the circle. During our lifetimes, Polaris will always be the Pole Star, but that does change over time as the Earth 'wobbles' on its axis. Thuban was over the

North Pole about 4,700 years ago and Vega will be in another 12,000 years.

So now as you look at Polaris you will understand why it was known as the *scip-steorra* ('ship-star') as long ago as the 10th-century.

Colin Huggins

BLYTHBURGH CHURCH

Goodbye Simon

We were sad to say goodbye to Simon Pitcher who had been Rector of the Sole Bay team of eight churches which includes Holy Trinity, Blythburgh. Simon is now the vicar of Lavenham and leaves a big hole to fill. Recruitment is already underway, and it is hoped that a replacement will be found by the autumn.

Easter specials

Easter is coming and the first service we're hosting is **on Maundy Thursday 6 April at 8pm**. It will take a different approach to previous services, as we respond creatively to the ancient service of **Tenebrae**, which means shadows. With the help of poetry and music from *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace* by Sir Karl Jenkins, we will explore the dramatic events on the night of Jesus' last supper.

On **Good Friday 7 April at 5pm**, we'll be continuing our Blythburgh tradition when, we'll be inviting people to help build our **Easter Garden**, retell the Passion Story and hunt for Easter eggs!

There is an Easter Day service of Holy Communion on **Sunday 9 April at 11am**.

Café and mini-market

Always popular as a social gathering for the village, the next two are taking place on **Friday 28 April and Friday 26 May from 10.30am to 12pm**.

Coronation weekend

We're delighted to announce that the Halesworth Ringers have offered to ring a quarter peal on **Coronation Day Saturday 6 May**. We are also happy to say that the Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Martin Seeley will be our guest at **Evensong** the day after, on **Sunday 7 May at 6pm**.

Friends of Holy Trinity Open Day

20 May 2 – 4pm A Life of Discovery: Remembering Janet Becker
For the Friends Open Day, Blythburgh's Alan Mackley will celebrate the life of Janet Becker, historian and conservationist, and daughter of renowned Suffolk artist Harry Becker. He has discovered among her effects, a charming, hand-written diary of a 450-mile motor tour of Suffolk churches which she undertook aged 19. He will introduce this remarkable document which illuminates with humour, and her own illustrations, life in wartime East Anglia.

Holy Trinity, Blythburgh is a friendly and inclusive church – everyone's welcome.

FIELD NOTES

February 1st saw an unusual visitor to the river Blyth, with the appearance of a female Common Scoter. These birds are a Northern breeding species. This is the first time I have recorded this deep diving sea duck within the parish, although they are fairly regular winter visitor on the sea off Dunwich and other deep water sites.

Great Egret, Water Pipit, Spotted Redshank and the Peregrine Falcon have all been seen intermittently on the Blyth, while a more unusual winter visitor was a Curlew Sandpiper, seen at Wolsley Creek – these birds are normally just an infrequent spring visitor and a regular autumn passage migrant.

The short spell of cold weather brought in a large influx of continental Blackbirds, which surprisingly consisted of over 90% males.

Early March saw a huge movement of Black-tailed Godwits on the Blyth, birds starting to move back to their breeding grounds in Iceland and other sites in Northern Europe especially Russia. On the 18th, the first summer migrant arrived in the parish, a female Black Redstart, although there have been a number of other spring migrants along the coast, including Garganey, Stone Curlew, Swallow, Common Swift, Wheatear and Willow Warbler. So, hopefully it will not be too long until we hear the first Cuckoo and Nightingale.

The short mild spell of weather brought much of the spring flora out early, with a fine show of Snowdrops, Lesser Celandine and Primrose, while there was a lovely display of a less common early flower, Winter Hellotrope, alongside the A12, just North of the Plough Inn at Wangford.

I. Noknowt



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THE SPIES' LANDLORD

If you look at 'Isokon' in Dunwich Road, built in the 1960s by Jack Pritchard for his retirement, the words 'Espionage' and 'Treason' are unlikely to come to mind. But consider Jack's other 'Isokon', the Lawn Road flats in



Hampstead, completed in 1934, and another picture emerges. 'The Spies' Landlord' isn't a title Jack Pritchard would have recognised. But what we now know about some of his tenants suggests that it is, although unwittingly, literally true.

I thought about this when watching Lucy Worsley on TV talking about one of Jack's

tenants, Agatha Christie. Filmed appropriately in a Lawn Road flat perched on another Pritchard icon – the Long Chair he commissioned from Marcel Breuer in the 1930s – she made the point that the novelist was never locked into a country-house mode: her plots reflected the time in which she wrote. I wondered that if she had known about her fellow tenants, her work might have taken a completely different direction.

In the 1930s and 40s, Jack Pritchard provided accommodation for many refugees from Fascism. His tenants included Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and Lazlo Moholy Nagy from the German modern art and design school, the Bauhaus. British artists and writers drawn to the flats included Henry Moore and Nicholas Monsarrat, as well as Agatha Christie.



The restaurant and dining club was run by Philip Harben, one of the first TV chefs.

It's not surprising that some of the German communist emigres Jack supported were Soviet sympathisers. Russia was, after all, our WW2 ally. So, it is hardly surprising that secrets were passed to the East. It's now known that no fewer than seven Soviet agents lived in the flats over the period 1934-

1947. A further 25 possible sub-agents were connected to the flats or Lawn Road itself. What made this location an attractive hub of Soviet espionage? First, the flats had always attracted left-wing admirers of the Soviet 'experiment'. Then, more covert activity was facilitated by the design of the building, which made it easy to enter and leave without being seen, and it was well-placed for the London Underground.

It was with the 'Cambridge Five', including Burgess, McClean and Philby, that espionage became treason. Their controller, the Austrian communist spy Arnold Deutsch – who lived in the flats from 1935 to 1938 – was the Christies' neighbour.

The Lawn Road building is now Grade I listed, as a fine example of the inter-wars Modern Movement in architecture. More modest 'Isokon' in Dunwich Road is not formally recognised for its architectural style, but it is a fitting companion for its London namesake. And it can prompt memories of remarkable events a lifetime ago.

Alan Mackley



THE PUB QUIZ RETURNS

It's time to pick a cheesy, pun-based team name and select your joker round, because the Blythburgh White Hart quiz night is back. It's starting again on **Thursday 13 April at 7.30pm – no need to book a table but please arrive by 7.15.** It will then take place on the second Thursday of each month. Maximum four people per team.

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, Church Road, (478 687)**

All applications will be treated in complete confidence.

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Blythburgh Associations

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Val Carse 07973 389898

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Sarah Wickham blythbelles@gmail.com

'www.blythburgh.onesuffolk.net

WILD WATCH

It's that time when we look for signs that spring really is sprung. Terry's magnolia overhanging Priory Road is flowering, and the primroses and daffs are out all around Blythburgh. The bluebells are still a little way off, however.

The regeneration of flowering plants that we expect, and eagerly await, each year, did have a beginning, of course. We know that flowers have been around for some 300 million years, but this discovery led to one of natural history's best-known dilemmas: what Darwin called an "Abominable Mystery". Flowering plants are one of two clades of plants called angiosperms, which means 'container seeds'. Unlike the other clade, the gymnosperms or 'naked seeds', angiosperms bear their seeds within a fruit of some kind, but they both share a common ancestor. Before this, their evolution is still largely an unknown science.



Fossil evidence shows that from the early Cretaceous, about 134 million years ago, flowering plants underwent a rapid development into many thousands of different families and species. This is a rich area of research, discovering the way different plants respond to light, changing temperatures, access to water, seasonal variance and relationships with fungi and pollinators. The mystery of angiosperms that Darwin found so abominable is the speed at which they seemed to have diversified. Something that he felt threatened his developing theory of evolution.

One family that illustrates this diversity, is the Magnolias. Their natural distribution is what scientists call "disjunct"; separated by considerable distances – East and South-east Asia, North and Central America and a few in South America. One reason for this could be that Magnolias have been around since the continents were in very different places to those of the present. This means Magnolias could be one of the earliest examples of their clade of angiosperms. In 1982, Japanese archaeologists were excavating an ancient site – a Bronze Age settlement called Asada – thought to be at least 2000 years old. In the storage pits, dug to store rice, one scientist found some large black seeds, which were identified as *Magnolia kobus*. They were planted and, amazingly, they germinated.

Plants are one of the most amazing and essential forms of life on our planet. They are the principal source of energy. Every other organism, whatever its size or diet, relies on plant-based material in some form or other.

A 'Rite', or even 'Riot of Spring' indeed.

Paul Lacey

DAISY BANK CXII

We have lost two good friends since the last Daisy Bank. Diana Coghill, now in the churchyard, and Jo who lived in Wenhaston. When I open the church in the morning, besides saying good morning to those buried inside the church, I also say good morning to Dick Allen whose grave I pass by on my way to unlock the door, and now to Diana, who is on the other side of the path. I include my good friend Ray St Clare Brown, the painter, one of my fellow artists in the Blythburgh art group in my painting days. He is buried on the other side of the church, so I include my hello to him with those inside the church, lucky enough to be buried under the floor since the church was first built. Weird I know, but part of my routine which is hard to break. Jo is buried on the other side of the valley, almost within our view, so she can't be forgotten.

On a lighter note, the aconites and snow drops are out and there is a hint of spring around Daisy Bank. The garden is cleared for summer, and I'm hoping our front border has at least a 50% chance of some of the plants I planted surviving. At least they get some light now that the trees are gone. New growth and new beginnings. We can put winter behind us for another year.

Last week, we went for a trip to Wenhaston to see where Jo is to be buried. It is a burial site near the marshes, where she and her husband Brian had decided would be the place for them when the time came, prematurely and suddenly, in Jo's case. After finding where it was, we continued on to Southwold where we parked in the high street. It was then I realised that my bag containing phone and wallet had been on the car roof when we left. It was eventually picked up on the Wenhaston Road by a good Samaritan called Colin Parker, a name I remember from when I was on the Parish Council.

He had gone out of his way to find out who I was and where we lived and had immediately returned it via our neighbours Paul and Sue. The iPhone had been zapped but the wallet – containing credit cards and all that sort of paraphernalia - was there, which was far more important. It turned out that Colin is the farmer of Laurel Farm on the Wenhaston side of the Blyth valley.

For all the years we've been in Fern Cottage, we've wondered who lived there. Every night we see the lights coming from his farm and, in the daytime, it is easily viewed from our garden. Since then, we have met him again and viewed close up his wonderful farm and house. It's straight out of one of Thomas Hardy's amazing novels. You can almost imagine Bathsheba Everdene from *Far From the Madding Crowd* greeting us at her front door. We thanked him for going out of his way for returning the bag. Thank God – in all the unpleasantness that is currently polluting our world at the moment – there are still some nice honest people out there.

Paul Bennett



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SPRING IS SPRUNG!

It's definitely time to start the sowing process in readiness for a successful (hopefully!) growing season.

We have our first outing of the year on 25 April when we'll be visiting Green Island Gardens. The land is laid out as a series of structured gardens displaying a huge range of unusual trees, shrubs, perennials, and bulbs and is often referred to as "A Plantsman's Paradise".

Our Annual Summer Show is open to all and will take place on Saturday 29 July so remember to start planning and planting for this event.

If you'd like to join the Horticultural Society, or want to know more about what we do, please get in touch with me – membership is still at the bargain price of £5 a year!

Sonia Boggis

Secretary, Blythburgh Horticultural Society

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