

# BLYTHBURGH

## FOCUS

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Issue No 46

<http://blythburgh.onesuffolk.net>

Aug/Sept 2019



Annie Brundrit

## HARRY BECKER LIVES ON

The painter Harry Becker died in 1928, and is buried in the churchyard of Holy Trinity, Blythburgh, but his influence lives on. He remains an inspirational figure for contemporary local artists, whose work can be seen in the church from 22-26 August in an exhibition entitled “Inspired by Becker”.

Harold Otto Becker was born in Colchester in 1865, youngest of seven. A talented young artist, he studied in Antwerp and Paris before returning to paint in London and Colchester. Although a fine portrait painter, exhibiting alongside Sickert, Sargent and Augustus John, he loved painting rural scenes and depicting working life in the countryside. He moved to Suffolk in 1913, living in Wenhaston and nearby villages, painting and drawing local life – often going into the fields with the labourers at dawn. His work is full of immediacy and energy, capturing the body language of labourers and the feeling of the landscape with expressive line and minimal detail.

Issue 46

2



Harry Becker

Becker and his family had strong local connections. His wife Georgina and daughter Janet (both artists and both buried in Blythburgh churchyard) were involved in church and parish activities. Georgina and Janet purchased the treble bell in the belfry which is dedicated to Harry. With this in mind, a quarter peal will be rung on the church bells from 5.30-6.15pm on Friday 23 August. Janet became a noted local historian, writing a book *Blythburgh, an Essay on the Village and its Church*, published in 1935.

“Inspired by Becker” will feature the work of many East Anglian artists producing work in tribute to the great man. There will be a preview open to all on Wednesday 21 August at 6pm.

As part of the exhibition, on Friday 23 August at 6.30pm Richard Hawking will talk about his new book *At the Field's Edge: Adrian Bell and the English Countryside* and the artist Annie Brundrit (see illustration) will be running an art workshop on Sunday 25 August from 12-5pm. Called “Abstraction and mark-making from the landscape: experiments in mixed media”, the workshop is suitable both for beginners and experienced artists, all materials are supplied and it costs £50 per head. To book a place contact Annie through [www.anniebrundrit.co.uk](http://www.anniebrundrit.co.uk).

For more information on the exhibition go to [www.ibbas.co.uk](http://www.ibbas.co.uk).

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SOLICITORS & NOTARIES

## VERGES UPDATE

Roses have been planted outside the Village Hall, creating a more welcoming and colourful entrance. Further planting is planned, and discussion are ongoing with the Highways department. It is taking a bit longer than planned but we will get there.



## THE FALCON HAS LANDED!

I found this falcon on a sunny morning in July when I was out walking Dot the dog on the footpath by the river Blyth, along the old railway track. He or she was perched on the small timber bridge that spans a marshy inlet.

I expected it to fly away, but it didn't. Inching closer, I saw that that there was a bell attached to one leg and it was ringed. Then I noticed a grey pod that looked like a GPS tracking device hanging round its neck. I assumed it must be injured and decided to try to pick it up, but as I reached for it, it toppled off the bridge into the reeds.



I did manage to gather it up then, but not without squeals of pain – from me – as it sank its needle-sharp talons into my hand. Walking back home, I bumped into my neighbour Val Carse, who helpfully looked after Dot, our border terrier, as we took this (as yet unidentified) bird of prey back to my house. My wife Meryl and I took the bird to Wangford Vet Clinic and handed it in for their safekeeping.

I was told later, that the team had managed to trace the bird's breeder somewhere in Staffordshire, who had said that this was a Saker falcon. I'm told that, in the wild, the species breeds from central Europe eastwards across Asia to Manchuria, and that it winters in Ethiopia, the Arabian Peninsula, northern Pakistan and western China. It is the national bird of Hungary.

The Saker is similar to a Gyrfalcon and, like its close cousin, has been used in falconry for thousands of

years. This particular bird turned out to be uninjured, but possibly simply tired and hungry. It was collected by its breeder and is – I hope – safe and sound. If I hear more, I will share whatever information I get. Next time I walk the dog, remind me to take a leather gauntlet with me. **Malcolm Doney**

## A PLACE TO REMEMBER...

The Latitude Festival was first held in July 2006 and it quickly became a regular fixture in the Henham Park calendar. Every year, thousands of people flock there to enjoy a weekend of music, comedy, dance, poetry and theatre. If the wind direction is right, we can sit in our garden and enjoy music from the main stage and. From the relative calm of a Blythburgh garden, I often wonder how many of the Festival goers pause to consider others who have visited the place before them.



As you might imagine, the history of Henham Park goes back much further than 2006. Early records indicate it was owned and used as hunting ground by the de la Poles (Earls of Suffolk) but, in 1513, when Henry VIII ordered the execution of Edward de la Pole, these lands were granted to Charles Brandon, the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Suffolk. Following his death in 1545, the Crown granted Henham to Sir Arthur Hopton of Blythburgh who immediately sold the estate to Sir Anthony Rous, of Dennington, near Stradbroke. The Henham Estate has subsequently remained "in the family".

Houses on the site have also come and gone: from an original timber-framed structure with its own protective moatyard, to a fine estate house which burned down in 1773 when an allegedly drunken butler had a mishap with a candle, to the most recent hall which was

demolished in 1953.

A constant feature of Henham Park has been the extensive grounds: firstly, used for hunting and most recently for leisure. But look closely and you may just find a small memorial that marks a terrible day in history – 29 March 1944. It was a Wednesday morning and 77 B24 Liberator bombers came together over the Henham estate to assemble into formation to set off on a bombing raid on the German V bomb sites at Watten.

This was unusual, as such formations usually came together over the sea off Lowestoft – but because of good weather, the individual groups of planes from Hardwick, Flixton and Seething were allowed to make formation over their own airfields before joining up en masse over Henham. At around 10.45am disaster struck. Two aircraft collided. Both spiralled out of control and crashed onto the Henham Estate either side of the A145 Beccles Road. As both aircraft were loaded with a combined total of seven 2000lb and two 1000lb bombs, it was no surprise that two bombs exploded as soon as the wreckage hit the ground.

Almost straightaway the military police, fire fighters and medical crews from the USAF base at Holton arrived on the scene. Many servicemen from the airfield, plus civilian helpers from the surrounding area, were quickly on the scene to help with rescue attempts. Sadly, at approximately 11.30am, as the police were organising the helpers, a massive explosion took place in the wreckage resulting in more fatalities and many serious injuries. Maybe next time I hear music drifting over from the Obelisk stage I shall pause to remember them.

### Sonia Boggis

*I am indebted to H A Took for sharing his revised account of 'Disaster Over Henham'.*

*Ed: This wasn't the only Liberator explosion over the area in 1944. There was also the incident on 12 August involving the death of Joe Kennedy Jr, memorialised in Blythburgh Church (see the war memorial in the church for details).*



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## WILDWATCH

Surrounded as we are on three sides by water, it's not surprising that Blythburgh has a good population of water birds, and what we share with many other places in the UK is a

good population of gulls. I've always had a soft spot for them in spite of their growing reputation for kleptomania and knavery. Gulls display some of the most fascinating behaviour of any bird; they have a family tree to rival the Royal Family's in complexity and can, paradoxically, be quite hard to tell apart.

Gulls, or 'seagulls' as the press and many other people call them, are a worldwide family consisting of many different species. This fact seems to surprise many folk who hitherto may have just suspected that those noisy things are all the same. The gull family actually comprises 11 genera but the ones we're most familiar with are the *Larus*. These include the ubiquitous European herring gull, along with its close cousins, the great black-backed (our biggest gull) and the lesser black-backed.

Among the smaller gulls, most common is the black-headed gull – which is an obvious misnomer as the birds' heads are chocolate-brown. This bird belongs to a different genus from the herring gull. Even more confusingly, the Mediterranean gull, which does indeed have a black head, is in a different genus to the black-headed!

The only member of the gull family that can truthfully be called a seagull is the kittiwake which, naturally, belongs to another genus. Kittiwakes spend much of their non-breeding period out at sea and are the only members of the family that nest on sea cliffs. If you want to see them locally, visit the Claremont Pier in Lowestoft during summer. For decades there has been a regular colony breeding on the timberwork of the pier where this photograph was taken. They are also our only gull with black legs and feet.

In fact, legs and feet are one of the best ways to tell gulls apart. If the bird has a light grey back and pink feet, it's a herring gull; darker grey back and yellow feet, a lesser black-backed; dark grey back and pink feet, a great black-backed. Black-headed gulls and Mediterranean gulls both have red bills and feet, but the Mediterranean gull also has a black band at the tip of its bill. Confusingly, both species also lose the dark head in winter.

The gulls you're most likely to encounter around Blythburgh are the black-headed, herring, lesser black-backed, and great black-backed, in order of frequency. They can all look rather different through binoculars than they do in your bird book, and a lot depends on the bird's age or the time of year you see them. Ultimately, though, gulls are worth the effort – they're fascinating birds in spite of their bad name. Just remember one thing when gull-watching. It all comes down to the feet! **Paul Lacey**



## HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

'Hort Soc' members have enjoyed three events so far this year, starting with a 'Gardeners Question Time' type event with questions answered by Susannah Sharman from Garden Art and Design. It was a most informative evening and a very pleasant social event enjoyed by everyone.

This was followed by a visit to Wyken Hall Gardens on the morning of Tuesday 11 June. Despite the rather wet weather we thoroughly enjoyed our time in these spacious and pleasant gardens, introduced to us by the owner Kenneth Carlisle. Excellent cake and coffee was served before we wandered around the lovely grounds and browsed the shop.

Some 30 members attended the summer Garden Party which was held in the wonderful garden of Roderick and Claire at Mill End this year, with refreshing Pimms served by Terry, and mountains of delicious food. We had fantastic weather and a most enjoyable afternoon was had by all.

The annual summer Flower & Produce Show took place on a rather wet Saturday 27 July. With classes for vegetables, flowers and decorative plants, flower arranging and cookery. There were an amazing 134 entries from 22 members, and the standard of entries was once again very high. The judge for the vegetable class was hugely impressed by the winning lettuce and was very keen to discover the variety. An impressive £230 was raised and will be added to the fund towards a memorial bench for Tom and Gillian Lond-Caulk who were root and branch Hort Soc participants.

The next members event will be the annual dinner at the end of September followed by a Film night with food on Friday 18 October. More details on this event will be circulated nearer the time and in the next Focus magazine. **Val Carse**



## SUMMER SHOW 27 JULY



Photos Colin Huggins

## MURDER SHE WROTE



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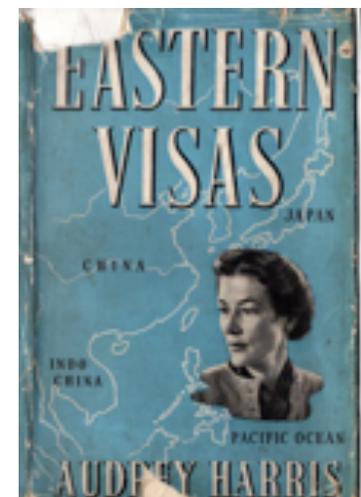
In June 1940, at Pentonville prison after a two-day trial, Udham Singh was hanged for the murder of Sir Michael O'Dwyer earlier that year. Singh is the subject of a new biography by Anita Anand, *The Patient Assassin: A True Tale of Massacre, Revenge and the Raj* (Simon & Schuster).

The killing happened at the Caxton Hall, London, at a joint meeting organised by The East India Association and the Royal Central Asian Society. Sir Michael, a former Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, was in the chair. After a vote of thanks was proposed, shots rang out. Sir Michael fell dead. The Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, and two senior Indian administrators were also wounded.

The gunman was overpowered and arrested. His motive seemed to be that he saw O'Dwyer as an apologist for General Reginald Dyer whose troops, in 1919, had opened fire on unarmed protesters in Amritsar, killing 379 (officially) or perhaps more than 1,000 (local estimates).

Why my interest? Well, another speaker from that blood-spattered platform was Audrey Harris, author of *Eastern Visas*, published in 1939, describing her journey in 1935-36 to the Far East and back. This captured the imagination of *The Times*' correspondents. A despatch from Simla in August 1936, headed "ENGLISH GIRL'S TRAVELS. INDIA VIA MANCHUKUO AND TIBET" is typical. "Miss Audrey Harris," it reported, "a young English girl now staying at Viceregal Lodge, has just completed an adventurous journey, travelling alone from London across Siberia, to Manchukuo, Korea, Japan, and the Dutch East Indies, and thence to India by way of Khatmandu, in Nepal, and Yatung, in Tibet. After a stay in Simla she plans to return to London via Afghanistan, Persia, and the Caucasus.

"Miss Harris travelled 'hard' across Siberia to Manchukuo and Korea, and then down into Peking. The British authorities tried to dissuade her from going on to Jehol, but she was helped by the Japanese and travelled there in an omnibus filled with Japanese soldiers." Truly a roll-call of today's trouble-spots!



Blythburgh came to know Miss Harris as Audrey Malan of The Green. She married Edward Malan just two months before that fateful London event. Her eventual life, as wife of a Harrow School housemaster, was to be very different from her eastern adventure, but an enduring contact she maintained with former pupil King Hussein of Jordan is evidence that an exotic element survived.

Edward died in 1980 and Audrey in 1994. They are remembered in the church through the restoration of the Lombardic lettering on the outside of the east wall and in an inscription below a window. I am reminded of another former local resident, John Hill of Wenhaston

Mill. His *BETTER LATE than Never?*, published in 2002, describes his 1935 round-the-world journey as a 22-year-old Oxford graduate. He also visited the Far East and he also attracted the attention of *The Times*. Gap years are not what they were! **Alan Mackley**

# Blythburgh's Big Weekend



The weekend of 2-4 August saw a confluence of local talent and celebration with – for the first time – a combination of a Summer Exhibition in the church and Blythburgh Day in the Priory Gardens. Hugely enjoyable all round.



Above left and left: The opening party for the Summer Exhibition which featured 14 creative contributions from



Right: opening service in the priory ruins.





Above: bowling for the pig  
 Above right: stone painting winners  
 Left: the ukelele band add a splash of colour  
 Right: Alfie, best in show  
 Below: Blythburgh's line dancers strut their stuff



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# LATITUDE 2019

A sunny weekend with music, entertainment, food and drink as well as funky costumes and pink sheep.



Photos

Christine Fisher. Illustration by Lucy Robinson

## NOTES FROM DAISY BANK LXXXI

I've always been blessed, or not blessed, with a rather stern demeanour. This gives some people the feeling that they should avoid me at all costs. In a previous life I would often wonder why my work colleagues would get all the visitors and enquiries and I did not. However, were they forced eventually to meet me and have some contact, they were always pleasantly surprised that the face belied the personality.

Not a saint but nevertheless not an ogre. Although I am saddled with a bit of a temper when provoked of which I am not proud – luckily losing it these days is pretty rare. The tranquility and peaceful beauty of Blythburgh overcomes all. Rather, I seem to spend most of my life laughing; I am somebody that loves life and looks forward to every day that I have, and please God, will have. So, if you see me passing by, don't worry. Really, I don't bite and I'm not as dreadful as you think!

A few weeks ago we were in our sitting room and through the French windows we saw a young muntjac deer. And last night, it actually peered in, its nose almost pressed to the window. I know they are bad for gardens with their precious plant-eating habits, but it was still nice to add another mammal to our garden's wildlife.

And, yesterday I caught Milo the cat playing with a very strange object. It turned out to be a very small and young grass snake. Having retrieved it before any real damage was done, I noticed its mouth wide open giving the impression that it was dead. Removing it to another part of the garden, it eventually slowly closed its mouth, and the tongue started to flicker. Within a few seconds it had gone. A few years ago, one of Milo's predecessors was on the steps confronting a mature grass snake, who hissed and was in the process of adopting a strike position. Maurice, the Siamese in question, decided to avoid anything so strange, and all ended well.

With Chris Packham egging us on, we've now given over half of the garden to wild life areas. No mowing, just paths between wild areas with the formal, mainly rose, garden nearer to the house and a small orchard to one side. How different to when we first arrived. The then owner had been head gardener for Lady Critall (of windows fame), who'd created a magnificent formal garden with large areas of lawn. Ignorance and laziness have destroyed all that, and although I miss what was, we are more than happy with the way it is now.

I have a good friend who visits us several times a year who, if he had his way, would cut back everything with nice well-mown lawns everywhere. He always comes armed with a chainsaw just in case I relent. So far, I have been able to hold him off. The thought of our house no longer covered with ivy, Virginia creeper and rambling roses fills us with horror. And think of the insulation. You know, save the planet!

Finally, my neighbours Lily and Derek wanted me to mention how grateful they are for all the help they have had from the people of Daisy Bank – in particular Peggy Meredith from the other side of the village. It's a difficult time for both of them as far as mobility is concerned, and they just wanted to say how kind people are.

**Paul Bennett**

## BLACK SHUCK

Black Shuck. Will Blythburgh church ever be rid of that demonic beast? The story of the devil in the guise of a great black dog terrorizing the congregation during a violent thunderstorm in 1577 originated in a pamphlet published in that year. Specific references to Black Shuck and his (or her?) claw marks on the north door are much newer, even as late as the mid-20th century I think. Now a graphic novel by a Canadian author, Mark Allard-Will, supported by a number of artists, sets out, in no uncertain terms, to keep the legendary ball rolling.

*The Burning Black. The Legend of Black Shuck*, published by Canmore, adapts “one of England’s most enduring myths” involving “a monster that has transcended time itself”: “England 1577. With only her wits to aid her, teenage Mabel is forced to fight for her life as Black Shuck, the mystic beast that inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, wreaks terror on her once peaceful village.” Phew!

In a violent, blood-spattered tale, Black Shuck is said to be the reincarnation of a Danish king, Guthrum. He was cursed by Odin, as god-sent revenge for losing in battle to the Saxon King Alfred, and accepting baptism as a Christian. Mabel finally defeats Shuck with the power of the cross. But does she? The final image is of a hooded figure, clearly Guthrum, intent on further mischief. And to reinforce the message the illustration following ‘THE END’ is that scarred north door.

The author knows his sources: he illustrates the 1577 pamphlet. He also states clearly that his is a work of fiction. But myths have to start somewhere. How long will it be before a visitor to the church asks a question about King Guthrum? Start counting.

**Alan Mackley**



## ***The Blythburgh Latitude Trust is making grants***

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### ***BLYTHBURGH ASSOCIATIONS***

**Blythburgh Latitude Trust**  
Jim Boggis 01502 478687

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**Blyth Belles**

[Sarah Wickham blythbelles@gmail.com](mailto:Sarah Wickham blythbelles@gmail.com)

**A message for all newcomers to Blythburgh: If you have come to the village in the  
last three years and not received a welcome pack please contact  
Roderick Orr-Ewing on [roderick@millend6.plus.com](mailto:roderick@millend6.plus.com)**

## NEWS FROM BLYTHBURGH CHURCH

### Let's go animal

On **Sunday 18 August at 11am** our hugely popular service for the **Blessing of Animals** will take place. All creatures great and small are welcome. Last year, the greatest creature was a horse and the smallest a woodlouse. We'd be delighted to see all of the above and whoever else you'd like to bring.



### Cake it easy!

Join the gathered throng at our monthly café and Mini-market on **Friday 30 August from 10.30am, til noon.**

### Harvest Festival

Blythburgh church celebrates Harvest Festival on **Sunday 8 September at 11.15am**. This year, our harvest collection will benefit the work of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The service will be followed by a celebratory **harvest lunch**. Everyone's welcome, and if you'd like lunch please let Meryl Doney know by emailing [meryldoney@me.com](mailto:meryldoney@me.com) or calling 01502 478 229.

### On yer bike

**Saturday 14 September** sees the annual Suffolk Historic Churches

Trust 'Ride & Stride', where hundreds of people walk or cycle between Suffolk churches to raise funds for these striking buildings. It takes place from 9am to 5pm. More information at: [shct.uk/ride-and-stride](http://shct.uk/ride-and-stride). If you'd like to participate, please contact Paul Simmons at 01986 948 277 or [paul.simmons@uwclub.net](mailto:paul.simmons@uwclub.net). Otherwise, sponsorship forms will be available at the back of the church.

**RIDE + STRIDE**



2019  
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# Blessing of the Animals

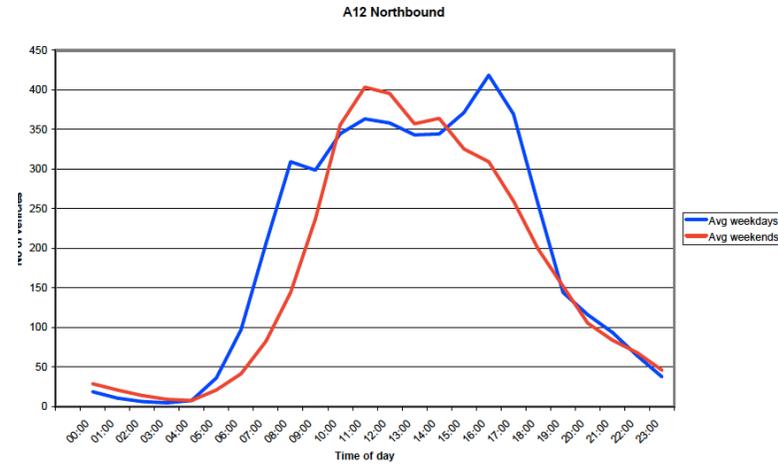
11.00 AM  
Sunday 18th August

*Bring your pet to be blessed.*  
All creatures great & small, very welcome.

*Parking available for cars, horse boxes, etc.*

<b>What's on</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Time</b>
18 August	Blessing of the Animals	Church	11am
21 August	Inspired by Becker Exhibition Opening	Church	6-8pm
22-26 August	Inspired by Becker exhibition Full details: <a href="http://ibbas.co.uk">http://ibbas.co.uk</a>	Church	10.30-5.30pm
8 September	Harvest Festival and Lunch	Church	11am
14-15 September	Heritage Open Days	Walpole Old Chapel	9-5pm
14 September	Historic churches sponsored bike ride	Visitor station at the Church & Walpole Old Chapel	9-5pm
14 September	Jazz evening in memory of Sidi Scott	St Peter & St Paul Wangford	7.30pm
15 September	Meditative service with Anam Cora Singers	Church	5pm
26 September	Hort Soc Annual Dinner	The Plough	7pm
11-12 October	William Alwyn Festival	Church	TBC
18 October	Hort Soc film and food night	Village Hall	TBC
15 November	Hort Soc Social/AGM	Village Hall	7pm
30 November	Christmas Market	Church	12-4pm
<b>Regular Events</b>			
Every Tuesday	Line Dancing	Village Hall	7.30pm
Every Thursday	Tours of the Village Church	Holy Trinity Church	11.00am
First Friday of the month	Film Club	Village Hall	7.30pm
Last Friday of the month	Café and Mini Market	Holy Trinity Church	10.30-12
1 <sup>st</sup> Thurs of the month	Blyth Belles	Check with blythbelles@gmail.com	7.30pm
2nd Wed of the month, bi-monthly	Parish Council Meetings	Village Hall	7.15pm

**SPEED WATCH - THE TRAFFIC REPORT**  
**SPEED WATCH - THE TRAFFIC REPORT**



In this report I'm going to focus on volume of traffic rather than speed. We know that on, say, the A12 southbound late at night only 30% of vehicles are driving under 35mph and the other 70% are driving at illegal or highly illegal speeds. I want to put that in context by showing, with these charts, the volume of traffic at different times of day

We can see that between 22:00 and 05:00 – when the worst speeding occurs – the traffic density is very low, varying from one vehicle every 40 seconds to one vehicle every 10 minutes.

This compares to the day time peaks of a vehicle between every 6 seconds (southbound) 9 seconds (northbound). There's more on the southbound route because some turn into the Dunwich Road. **Roderick Orr-Ewing**

