

BLYTHBURGH

FOCUS

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BULCAMP AND HINTON



Issue No.19

<http://blythburgh.onesuffolk.net>

January/February 2015

Road closure chaos on the A 12

Lorries going north careered round the bend on the A12 in Blythburgh on Tuesday night to be confronted with a road closed sign just in front of the driveway to the village hall. One lorry jack-knifed as the driver braked to avoid going into the road works which had closed the road at 9 pm.

A second lorry came very quickly after it and managed to brake just in time to avoid what would have been a very serious collision.

Clearly warning notices before coming into the village were inadequate. Car after car came after the lorries and, like one lorry, had to go into the hall driveway to turn round. The other lorry had to reverse into the White Hart car park moving very cautiously to avoid knocking down the boundary walls and the shop.

Jeff and Wendy Sutton were enjoying the pub quiz but their evening was severely disrupted as they feared their home, The Custom House, would be hit by vehicles taken by surprise by the road closure.

Normal practice is for the parish council to be informed that the road is to be closed but neither the chair of the council, David Tytler, nor the clerk, Jim Boggis, received any notification.

A local policeman, questioned by Jeff Sutton, told him the next day that he did not know that the road

was to be closed. The road remained closed till 2.30 am and both Jeff and Wendy were kept awake by vehicles turning round till the road re-opened as more lorries and cars drove into the village to be confronted by the closure.

At its January meeting, the parish council decided to write to Suffolk Highways, asking why the council had not been told of the work, and what it was for.

The Focus asked Suffolk County Council why the parish council was not warned of the closure. The press office was also asked whether police had been warned, but so far there have been no answers.

Local residents had noted the poor state of the road at the same place as it was closed for several months last year for flood prevention work. The county council was asked if the inadequacy of that work was the reason for the closure but as with all other questions no response has been forthcoming.

The only good news is the growing absence of the wattle fencing obscuring the view of the Blyth at the point where the flood defence work was carried out. Thankfully, the wind has taken its toll. Let's hope it carries on its welcome work.

Olive Forsythe

The Owen Williams Memorial Quiz

A quiz is to be held in Blythburgh Village hall on January 24 at 7.15pm in memory of Ro Williams' son Owen, who died last summer. All funds raised from the quiz will be donated to the charity SUDEP, Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy. Booking is essential with either Ro 07886465552 or Sarah 07810632987. Please bring your own drinks

In the 2014 National Parish Magazines Award the Focus was placed ninety-second out of more than 600 publications. If you would like to place an item or an advertisement, please contact David Tytler, 01502 478521 or email david@dytler.freeserve.co.uk. The views expressed are not those of Blythburgh with Bulcamp and Hinton Parish Council.

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NEWS FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL

Prepare for the May parish elections

Parish Council chairman David Tytler reminded fellow members that Parish Council elections would be held on May 7 and said that he hoped that all the existing members (see box below) would seek re-election.

At the same time, he invited others in the parish to consider putting themselves forward. The Parish Council is the level of local government closest to the community. It is consulted by Suffolk Coastal District Council on a range of issues, especially planning. Its direct responsibilities include setting and managing the parish budget.

The Parish Council funds the Village Hall; the play site in Highfields; bus shelter cleaning on the A12; and the Blythburgh Community Speed Watch, although this is currently suspended.

Recent council initiatives include the creation of the Blythburgh Latitude Trust; Celebrating Blythburgh; and a traffic management plan which is currently being discussed with Suffolk County Council and should result in speed warning signs on the A12 and B1125, and village gateways on the A12 and B1125.

The Parish Council is responsible for setting and managing the Parish Budget; maintaining the village hall, playsite and bus shelters; and reviewing planning applications.

The council currently meets in Blythburgh Village Hall on the third Tuesday every other

month at 7.30pm, preceded by a public forum at 7.15 when parishioners are welcome to raise any concerns. The council arranges a full Parish Meeting once a year, usually in May.

PLANNING: At its meeting on 20 January the parish council objected to a renewed proposal to convert the garage at White Cottage, The Street, into a two-bedroom dwelling. The council objected to a similar proposal in November 2013 and the planners rejected it. The location has a history of problems with on-street parking and is considered to be inappropriate for a residence. It is in a sensitive part of the conservation area, close to several listed buildings.

The design of the new property was thought to be of insufficient merit in this context. The council also noted that the planners' current assessment of the need for new houses in Blythburgh is zero.

The council agreed to the installation of dormer windows and internal alterations at Haw Wood Farm, Darsham Road, and to the lopping down of two overhanging branches from an ash tree in The Old Custom House, Station Road.

FINANCE: At its January meeting the council was told that it held **£9426.74** in its bank accounts.

YOUR PARISH COUNCILLORS

Chair: David Tytler
01502 478521

**Vice Chair/Chair planning
advisory group: Alan Mackley**

Chair finance advisory group
John Blakesley

Councillors
Alan De Thabrew, Debbie Gifkins
Roderick Orr-Ewing, Cliff Waller
Clerk: Jim Boggis 01502 478521

BLYTHBURGH ASSOCIATIONS

Horticultural Society
Jenny Allen 01502 478314
Blythburgh Matters
Ro Williams
01502 478484
Film Club
Olive Forsythe 01502 478521
Blythburgh Trust administrator
01502 478687
Village Hall
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Every Friday – take-out fish and chips £6.95

Quiz night – second Tuesday of every month

***Now taking bookings for Valentine's Day
and Mothers' Day***

Film nights in Blythburgh



Blythburgh Film Club's next films will be shown on Friday February 6 at 7.30pm, doors opening at 7pm, with a children's matinee on Saturday February 7 at 3.15pm, doors opening at 3pm. Wine will be available but you can also bring your own refreshments to the adult showing. Pop corn, a soft drink and an ice cream will be supplied at the matinee. The White Hart will provide fish and chips from 6pm to 7pm on Friday for cinema goers at £7 a head. Booking is essential. mentioning that you are a film goer and letting bar staff know you have arrived.

Films will normally be shown on the first Friday of each month but the terms of the licence held by the hall restrict advertising of the films to be shown.

Parishioners who are members of Blythburgh M@tters or have signed up to the film club's mailing list will be notified automatically. If you are not already on the email list but would like to be, please email olive@dytler.freemove.co.uk

Details will also appear on the Parish Council notice boards. There is no charge for the film but voluntary donations of £3 for adults and £1 for children towards the upkeep of the village hall and its services would be appreciated. Films will be shown monthly during the winter.

The following films have been shown so far: Richard Curtis's *About Time*; *Rio*; *The Grand Budapest Hotel*; Judy Dench and Steve Coogan in *Philomena*; *Frozen*; Richard Attenborough's *Oh! What a Lovely War*; and *How To Train Your Dragon*, *East of Ipswich* and *Jungle Book*... If you have missed any of the films, DVDs can be hired for £1.

If there is a film you would particularly like to see and for all other inquiries, including the films to be shown please call Pat or Terry Goss on 01502 478356 or David Tyler on 01502 478521.



The Blythburgh Latitude Trust makes grants to meet specific needs of individuals and families in the parish. It has already given away more than £19,000, providing,

for example, IT, sports equipment and school uniforms. The Trust will also give grants to groups to support projects to improve the quality of life in the parish of Blythburgh, Hinton and Bulcamp.

The Trust has, for example, supported the play site, village hall, the Christmas Tea and the annual pantomime visit. If you have a need, contact the honorary administrator, Jim Boggis, Marsh

End, Church Road (01502 478 687).

All applications will be treated in complete confidence. Normally grants will not exceed £200. Parents or carers must endorse applications for children under 16.

BLYTHBURGH REFLECTIONS

Of battles, burdens and fallen angels....

The year was drawing to a close when I sat down with local historian, Dr Alan Mackley, to learn more about the history of Holy Trinity, Blythburgh. Dark, dirty, wet and smelly... following years of neglect Holy Trinity was closed in 1881 by order of the Bishop of Norwich.

How had such a magnificent building come to be in such a sorry state and what could be done to put things right? To answer the first question, Alan took me back to 654, when, according to 12th century writings, the body of King Anna and his son were brought to a site in Blythburgh, having fallen in the Battle of Bulcamp fighting against Penda King of Mercia.

During the Saxon period Blythburgh was an important place; it had a Minster and one of the richest churches in Suffolk. It's often assumed that this church was the predecessor to Holy Trinity - but that is wrong. The rich church was Blythburgh Priory, part of the Royal Estate before it was granted, by Henry I, to the canons of St Osyth. The canons retained ownership until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1537 at which time the remaining properties passed to the Hopton family and eventually, by marriage, to the Blois family.

The predecessor to Holy Trinity was a poor church, one of two unendowed daughter churches, the other in Walberswick.

In the 15th century, Holy Trinity was rebuilt on a grand scale and richly decorated. Did this mean a change in fortunes? Did this mean a big population and a rich village?

No, it reflected a belief in Purgatory... if you were rich enough you could leave 'memories'

behind you; people could say prayers for your soul; often these 'memories' came in the form of big buildings and bold inscriptions. And Holy Trinity was built to be visible, it was richly decorated but, from completion, Holy Trinity was a burden on the local population. The roof was badly damaged in the great storm of 1577, which was responsible for the Black Shuck stories. Dowsing and the puritans caused more damage in the 1640s so Holy Trinity was already in a pretty poor state of repair.

In the 19th century the local population was made up of agricultural workers and a small

number of shop keepers and tradesmen. The vicar lived in Walberswick, the Lord of the Manor lived in Yoxford and most of the Blythburgh population worshipped at the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Dunwich Road.

The Blois family, local patrons since the 1600s, was likely to have suffered from the agricultural depression in the 1870s so 1881 wasn't a good time to

ask the patron, Sir John Blois, for financial support to keep Holy Trinity open.

Without support from the patron and the local population, the Bishop of Norwich was left with no choice. In 1881 Holy Trinity was closed. Fortunately it wasn't to be a case of splendid ruin, a church of fallen angels, tottering to its death but there was work to be done and a battle - restoration versus conservation - to be fought before Holy Trinity could reopen.

The battle to reopen Holy Trinity will be covered in the March Blythburgh Focus. To learn more, a recording of Sonia's conversation with Alan will be available online following the March Focus.



Words: Sonia Boggis
Illustration: Spike Gerrell

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Blythburgh Village Shop 01502 478833

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Email: blythburghshop@live.co.uk

Help to keep the lights shining

Many people say that, when they're driving along the A12 at night, the reassuring sight of Blythburgh church glowing in the dark is a way of saying, "I'm home!" But the unasked question is how much does it cost to keep the lights on, and who pays?



The short answer is that it costs around £100 a month in electricity alone and the cost is borne by gifts from the congregation. Last year, when the floodlights failed, there was widespread gloom and despondency, until they were repaired.

As a result, the church is offering people in the parish the chance sponsor the church floodlights. For just £20 per week anyone can choose a specific week (on a first-come, first-served- first basis). This could be to mark a birthday, an anniversary, or some other significant event. To take up this opportunity, simply pop into the village shop and pick up a sponsorship form

Thanks to the quizzers

The Parochial Church Council would like to say a hearty thank you to the brainy winners of the White Hart quiz night, who have donated their cash winnings to the church. It's much appreciated.

The Ash Wednesday service takes place on 18 February at 7.30pm...

The Friends of Holy Trinity has members from as far away as Penrith, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Bath, and even the USA. One of the earliest members was one Benjamin Britten. His name is entered in the membership book just above that of Mrs Becker, mother of the notable Suffolk painter, Harry Becker.

September last year saw the first ever Friends Open Day in the church. A resounding success, it was attended by around 80 people, who enjoyed the exhibition of art by Paul Bennett, an insight into Alan Mackley's new discoveries in the history of the Church and Priory, and – of course – tea and scones.

The day finished with wine tasting. Hosted by Sonia Boggis, we sampled three different wine varieties and finished with *Torres 10*, a very special Spanish brandy!

Since then, The Friends have welcomed 26 new members – an encouraging achievement – and there are now nine members in the village. Funds raised by the Friends are used for the maintenance and enhancement of the church building. It helps keep your church standing, so the whole village benefits. Big thanks to our remarkable Friends.

Time out

The Rev. Malcolm Doney, Associate Priest, is taking a nine-month sabbatical from his church duties from 1 April to 31 December 2015. He will still be around and about in the village, but will not be available to take specific church functions and services.

Ensure your home is warm this winter

Suffolk County Council, along with the seven District and Borough Councils in Suffolk, has launched a new scheme called Suffolk Energy Action with £6 million to be shared amongst local residents to improve their homes.

Is your loft in need of an insulation top-up, or does your house have cavity walls? If so you can get insulation at a heavily discounted price or in many cases completely free. The offer's available whether you are a homeowner or rent privately, regardless of income. Once the insulation is in place you will soon notice the difference it makes to the warmth of your home and the cost of your heating.

The price you pay for the work is determined by a free technical survey.

Suffolk Energy Action also provides funding to insulate pre-1930s homes that have solid walls so you could get a Warm Home Grant (typically 75%) of up to £6,000 towards the cost of solid wall insulation.

Once the insulation is in place you will soon notice the difference it makes.

Don't just take our word for it. Nicky in Holbrook has had external solid wall insulation fitted and has already noticed a difference: "The builders have been wonderful and the bathroom is definitely better. When we used to go in there on a winter morning it was always cold, whereas now you get a lovely warm feeling. I highly recommend it to anybody".

Most residents can get the grant, as long as there aren't any restrictions on their property (such as being a listed building), and those renting can join the scheme with their landlord's permission. It is not however, available if you are a council or housing association tenant, as your home should already meet energy efficiency standards.

Before you can get solid wall funding the government requires that you first have a Green Deal Assessment. It costs £29 (normally £99) and assesses the energy performance of your home for potential improvements and savings to provide options and advice for grant funding.

Once Suffolk Energy Action's partners – Climate Energy Ltd and Aran Services Ltd – have found the best options for you, they will arrange the installation using their network of qualified and trusted local experts.

Over the next few months Suffolk Energy Action will be at Suffolk supermarkets, libraries and community centres so you can ask questions face to face. And on our website is a handy list of frequently asked questions for more information.

So if a warmer house and lower bills sound good, and the funding sounds even better, apply now and get the ball rolling to a more comfortable life. Call Suffolk Energy Action on 0800 840 9090 (from a mobile: 01376 531517) or visit www.suffolkenergyaction.org

A chance to improve care services

Healthwatch Suffolk is recruiting members for its team of local volunteers to visit the county's health and social care services to assess the service provided, and make recommendations for improvement. If you have good judgment and a passion for health and care, this could be your chance to help make a difference to the delivery of care in Suffolk. For more information please visit www.healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk or call Amanda Stevens on 01449 703949.

Latitude Festival 2015 -----



The Tenth Latitude Festival will be held in Henham Park from July 16 to 19. Details of how residents may apply for tickets will be published in the *March Blythburgh Focus*.



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Enjoy a walk on the wild side



The Suffolk coast National Nature Reserve (NNR) in Blythburgh is one of three managed by Natural England along the Suffolk coast, the others being Benacre and Westleton Heath. A reserve since 1973, it continues into the neighbouring parishes of Walberswick, Dunwich and Westleton.

It is made up of some of the best remaining areas of Sandlings heathland, together with reedbeds, inter-tidal mudflats, grazing marsh, hay meadows, woodland and the tidal

estuary of the River Blyth. The reserve is one of the most diverse sites in the UK, with a wide mix of habitats in a small area. The reserve's Westwood Marsh is one of the largest blocks of freshwater reedbed in Britain. It was reclaimed for grazing at the beginning of the 18th century but flooded for defence purposes during World War II allowing the reeds to spread back over the marsh, returning it to its former glory.

Hay meadows have been re-created on the periphery of the marsh by summer-mowing areas of reedbed, resulting in a habitat rich in plants. Some of the NNR's woodlands were planted for game cover in the early 19th century but suffered severe damage in the great storm of 1987 and have since been part cleared and replanted. The Suffolk Sandlings heaths are the result of centuries of grazing by sheep and rabbits.

Since 1999 the reserve has been managed by Natural England, Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SVWT) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) with the Trust managing the hen reedbeds on the road to Southwold and jointly with the RSPB the Dingle area near Dunwich. Access to the site is by the more than 20 miles of public rights of way and nearly 400 acres of open access heathland, two of the most convenient access points for the village being along the estuary from the White Hart Inn or along the bridleway opposite Highfields.



If you take these routes they lead you through a range of habitats where distinctive wildlife can be found - in the reedbeds bitterns boom and otters rear their young, on the heaths red deer can be seen whilst in the woods it is more often a glimpse of a secretive badger. Some of the other specialities of the heaths include the silver studded blue butterfly and the natterjack toad as well as birds such as the nightjar and woodlark. Marsh harriers are a common sight and the mudflats of the Blyth host wintering flocks of avocet, knot and dunlin whilst common and little terns are summer visitors.

For further information please call the reserve office on 01502 676171 or download the reserve leaflet, which is available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/35020?category=23001>

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The Lead Hand of Blythburgh

A long time ago, perhaps 800 or even 2,000 years, someone of the medieval or Roman world placed their hand in wet sand, clay or plaster to make a mould. From it was cast a lead hand, fixing forever a firm do not pass gesture.

With a hole in the middle of the palm it could have been secured to a wall or post. Why was this done? Could it have been a votive offering, made to a god at a sacred shrine, to obtain relief for an afflicted part of the body?

The hand turned up in a Blythburgh garden not later than the 1940s. I first became aware of it in 2002. Responding to an internet reference I bought – from New Zealand – a copy of an exhibition catalogue. It listed items collected for a *Bygone Blythburgh* exhibition in aid of the Bells for Blythburgh fund, held at Ipswich Art Gallery in 1946.

The hand was described as being dug up in a garden in Blythburgh and Janet Becker, local historian, added a request for suggestions as to age and use. The thought then was that it could have been used as a charm against witchcraft.

I was reminded of this recently when Simon Loftus wrote to say that Southwold Museum, of which he is president, held a lead hand which had been given to them by Janet Becker in 1953.

Did I know anything about it? If it was a votive device, was there any evidence to suggest that there might have been a Roman shrine or temple in Blythburgh?

'Where is the hand now?' was a question I posed in the Blythburgh Parish News in 2002. I now know the answer to that but the wider questions about interpretation and a link to Blythburgh are still open. An intriguing possibility suggests itself.

Was Blythburgh's first church, on the priory site, built at an already sacred location? Did a Christian structure supersede a pagan one? That is known to have been a deliberate act in many places. *Time Team* archaeologists working at the priory turned up Roman roofing material including ridge tiles. Had there been a Roman building there or was this salvage from elsewhere? It is known that the main local Roman settlement was at Wenhaston.

There was obviously Roman activity in and near Blythburgh, including salt-making and possibly a fort, but there is no evidence, yet, for a community or shrine. Could one be linked to the river crossing? Now that the location of Blythburgh's first church has been confirmed, that is something new for archaeologists to think about.

Alan Mackley



Blythburgh Village Hall, which now has its own cinema equipment, is available for parties, events and clubs. The cost per morning, afternoon or evening session is £25 for village residents and groups and £30 for others. To book the hall, call 01502 478521 or 07850 140581.

Notes from Daisy Bank LXV

Sometime in the summer we decided that the time had come to replace the downstairs carpet. Getting near to disgusting but not quite, the time was right. The carpet fitters came and dignity was once more restored. However ever since then, a slug we have called *Bertie* has arrived and refuses to leave. Every morning there are the tell-tale signs of his presence across the carpet but can we find him, no we can't.

God knows what he's eating. And he has nothing to fear from us when he is finally apprehended. It might be the lawn rather than one of the borders but his safety is assured especially after such a long period of concealment.

Oscar the pheasant or is it his mate Felix, is still with us as are the squirrels, or are they rats, in the roof. And, of course, the spiders have come in for the winter. We tend to allow cobwebs, so at the moment the area around the fireplace somewhat resembles Miss Haversham's wedding feast. We have come to an accommodation with the spiders in the bathroom. When the shower is on they scurry away to a corner of the ceiling and when we have finished, they amble back and continue to eat, probably each other.

When I was a child and even into teenage years, I would always look under the bed before going to sleep to check that it was spider free. In the event it was a job for my Dad, or even my Mother, to clear the decks. However the tropics cured me of all that. I remember every morning lying in bed and watching an enormous spider come out and battle with a chit chat – a small lizard. Nobody seemed to win and I think they rather enjoyed the confrontation. It never worried me what they did while I was asleep. Maybe the battle continued over my prone and sleeping body. Who knows?

In that same room I noticed that often the end of my toes would be quite sore. At the time I put it down to ill-fitting shoes. It wasn't. The soreness was created by cockroaches feeding on

the hard skin at the end of my toes until they reached the meat of the subject where, thank God, they stopped. Nothing you can do about that I'm afraid. Cockroaches are part of the deal in that part of the world.

Another time I remember staggering back home late at night worse for the wear. Going along a jungle path next to a creek, I came across a small tree that had fallen onto the path. It wasn't until I stepped over it that I realised it was a very large python making its way from the jungle into the water. I stopped and watched it and such was its length and size it seemed an age until it finally disappeared.

My first trip to sea was on a banana boat going down to the West Indies. One of my colleague's so called japes for a first tripper, was to put two very large banana spiders in my bunk. I nearly died without the spiders even touching me such was the shock of seeing a spider that size.

A couple of days later, knowing who the culprit was, I put a sea hose through his port hole and turned on the valve. With about a six inch bore, those hoses can generate a hell of a lot of water. No more spiders in bunks from that time on.

I have just had a thought. The jungle and its critters would be no problem for me. The trouble is I lack television celebrity status. We are both avid watchers by the way.

In the garden we now have three feeding stations for birds. An inspired choice was to put several peanut containers in front of our French windows. We sometimes have a dozen or so blue tits, great tits and greenfinches feeding there which is a delight. We've even seen a woodpecker chancing his arm. We have sacks of peanuts and bird seed delivered so the birds are never going to go hungry in Fern Cottage garden thank God. And believe me they more than repay our commitment.

Paul Bennett

A date for your diary

The next meeting of Blythburgh with Bulcamp and Hinton Parish Council will be in the village hall on Tuesday March 17 at 7.30pm with the public forum starting at 7.15. Everybody in the parish is invited. Please come along and have your say.