



If you are reading this before July 5th hopefully you will join us to watch a film by **Holly Brega** on **The Land Girls and Horses of Suffolk**. We can't offer popcorn or ice cream, but Liz and Annie will be brewing a nice cup of tea or coffee. This follows on from the talk we had last year by Nicky Reynolds on the Women's Land Army and as Holly says on her website:

"This documentary film is important because the part these amazing women and horses played in the Second World War needs to never be forgotten and I want to inspire the next generation to develop an interest in these subjects which go hand in hand but are not often taught at school or seen on tv so I feel it is my duty as a story teller to share".

As with all our monthly meetings you don't need to be a SLHG member to come along, visitors pay just £4.00 (members £2.00).

If you missed the July meeting, then why not join us for our **August Archives** at 7:30 pm in the village hall on Wednesday August 2nd. There will be no speaker, but you can see and chat to local people about any research they might have done, photos or artifacts that might have been gathering dust, or just come along and see what local history is about. Chat about the good old days (or the bad old days!). Or if you missed our Tribute to King Charles III, you could sit quietly and watch the presentation / slide show we put together to reflect on how some local people celebrated past royal events.

If you have some local photos, postcards or family histories then why not dust them off and bring them along. **But** please if you can speak or email our secretary Jerry Voden first so we can plan tables and lay outs.

Jerry can be contacted on 01449 703717 or voden@btinternet.com.

Back in May, we welcomed Martin Cuthbert, who although he is employed by Cotswold Archaeology is a local lad. He had brought along a few artifacts and explained some steps involved in unearthing information about the lives of past peoples who had lived and worked the fields where today's Oak Farm Meadow now stands. The following is just a short report by Jerry of the presentation given to us by Martin on the **Thorney Green Road Dig**.

Jerry found it tantalising because "have you ever been at the start of a talk, where there is a slide on the screen as the introduction, but you can't remember where you have seen it before?"

The slide showed a farmer's field highlighted by a rainbow then realisation dawned, of course it was a view of Thorney Green Road fields prior to start of building works. I must have been past, either walking or in the car many times, but now only remember today's scene of a modern housing estate. Martin soon had us thinking back to 2017 when the company Cotswold Archaeology were commissioned to commence work on the site, prior to the start of building. He told us this is now government policy and all major sites, granted planning permission are now required to have an archaeological survey. Experienced staff are brought in and of course they hope to find evidence of a Roman Villa or an ancient fort or castle. This team have found evidence of these sort of buildings, and that has caused the

builders to re-jig the plans occasionally to allow the new build to go ahead. However, this did not happen here. Some of us may remember Tony Robinson in the Channel 4 programme Time Team, running about around the sites they were working on, going from trench to trench and down to *geo physics* to check out what was found. Martin told us this is much like how they work. Photos are taken, zones for digging are identified and numbered and trenches started.

Geo phys at the northern end of the field showed some interesting pictures and zone 1, trench 1 was started. Iron age pottery was uncovered, and evidence of that era was very positive. Following this, Roman remains were found with pottery and other evidence that they had been around the north end of the field. Zone 2, trench 2 was dug and this revealed evidence of a drainage ditch. Geo Physics suggested that this could be drainage for an Iron Age roundhouse but no physical evidence for a house was found, just the ditch. They also found evidence that the Romans had used the area for farming, food production was needed to feed an expanding Roman Army which may have been based in the area. Why you may ask, well there was a lot of unrest at the time and Colchester was nearby and that was a centre of a lot of Roman activity during this era.

Work was disrupted in early 2020 when Covid 19 hit. However, they were able to recommence but observing social distancing rules. Evidence of later activity from the 12th and 13th century was found in the form of pottery pieces, moving to the 13th and 14th century more finds of medieval life were unearthed but there were no finds of any major buildings on the site.

Martin finished his talk by repeating that Covid had put the dig back by a good few months and he showed us slides that revealed how the very wet weather had not helped but he felt that the dig had helped increase the understanding of life in this area. We were treated to a display of finds from the dig and Martin answered a variety of questions from our audience. We learnt that despite being called Cotswold Archaeology the company has an office in Needham Market and they carry out a lot of digs in Suffolk.

Thanks to Martin for his interesting talk. Annie and Liz made the tea and provided us all with a piece of Coronation Cake, which sent us home well provided for the night air. Whilst enjoying our cuppas most of us had questions for Martin took the opportunity to handle some of the finds he had brought along. It is not often that we get the opportunity to handle household pottery that has not been touched for hundreds of years.

Jerry's next review will be on our June meeting when our 2 speakers transported us down to Stowmarket church. May 2023 was a very important time as it saw the return of Stowmarket's church bells to be rehung in their rightful place. Did you know that according to a historical snippet dug up by an EADT press reporter **"back in 1165 Stowmarket Parish Church Bells 'were rung' during an earthquake – the walls of the church were damaged but there were no casualties"**.

Whatever your feelings maybe about the current spate of change of usage of agricultural land it has increased our understanding of the past. Following on from Martin's talk, Neil decided to take a look at what other surveys had found. More details can be found on-line

at <https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/library> but here are some brief summaries of recent archaeological investigations in Stowupland.

Land in Church Road opposite the Chapel by Suffolk Archaeology in 2018

A 13 trench archaeological evaluation undertaken revealed a medieval agricultural field system, with pottery of the 11th-13th century. Post-medieval postholes and the back fill of a large pit were uncovered where structural remains and a Saw Pit are depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey map. One undated gully ditch was further recorded.

Elm House by John Newman Archaeological Services in 2019

Evaluation trenching for a small residential development close to Elm House, a listed building with a 16th century origin, did not reveal any features except a large north-south orientated ditch shown on 19th century maps to the west, and parallel to Mill Street.

Trinity Park development by Oxford Archaeology in 2019

Excavation of two areas following evaluation, Activity in the north-western area began with a pre-enclosure field system that shifted during the 13th century. The 14th and 15th centuries saw the enclosure of Old House Pyghtle field and the introduction of a drainage moat and ponds to cope with the heavier clay geology. This period also saw the piecemeal enclosure of fields in the area. A cobbled surface or trackway ran from the north-western edge of the site to the drainage moat. The south-eastern area contained traces of an earlier field system. The main phase of activity was during the 11th to 13th centuries. This took the form of a farmstead, of which only the corner was revealed in the excavation area. A possible drove way ran along the side of the farmstead, and a watering hole was present just outside. The occupied area was abandoned by the 14th-15th century.

Stowupland High School Sixth Form Centre by Cotswold Archaeology in 2019

Six trenches were excavated. No archaeological features were revealed in two of the areas but ditches and a pit, all of a probable medieval date, were recorded in the third area. The nature of the finds and the feature fills suggest domestic occupation in the immediate vicinity.

Trinity Meadows development by Oxford Archaeology in 2021

A total of 29 trial trenches were opened which revealed a number of medieval ditches, mostly concentrated in the south-west corner of the field. A subsequent extension to the area was undertaken along the western edge of the development site. The excavation exposed a medieval farmstead consisting of field boundary ditches, enclosures and rectangular post-built structures. The farmstead went through two distinct phases of activity through the 11th to 13th centuries before being abandoned in the 14th century when a north to south aligned trackway ran across it. A large assemblage of pottery dating from the 11th to 14th century was recovered along with a small amount of Middle Bronze Age pottery which had probably been disturbed from a nearby truncated feature.

Land South-East Of Church Road by John Newman Archaeological Services in 2022

Evaluation trenching for an 18 dwelling development, did not reveal any archaeological features. The metal detector search did recover a moderately large number of small and largely fragmentary finds of late Post medieval date plus a Roman bow brooch of 1st century date and a small belt stiffener of late medieval to 16th century date.

All of which confirms that whilst Local History is about the when, what and why of where you live it invariably poses more questions than it answers! Answers about the recent past should be more accessible but all too often are frustratingly nebulous, hence our appeals for your memories.

DOWN MEMORY LANE (and the answer to Christmas quiz 2022 question 19)



My thanks to a SLHG member for this photo of the **Swifts Speedway cycle team** and to John Hill for his memories of the Swifts that he wrote for Telstar in 2010.

Do you have a relative who might remember being a Swift?

The speedway track was on the land behind where the Chinese take-away is now. I think it was the brainchild of Keith Hammond and Melvyn Birch. I am pretty sure they marked and cut it out with the help of a lot of others. I don't remember Melvyn riding much, I think he was more on the organising side. Keith certainly rode and was a member of the team. It was quite impressive, with proper starting gates that went up to start each race. At first the boys built their own bikes from old ones found in dad's shed and bits gleaned from the dump. The only thing that was ever bought was a low-g geared sprocket and maybe some handlebars.

Teams sprung up in all the villages around, and used to compete against each other in leagues and friendlies. They all had exotic names: Stowupland Swifts, Needham Robins, Old Newton Pirates and many more, which I am sure some of you will remember.

Us litt'uns were not big enough to ride in the team, but after the meeting some would lend us their bikes and we would take part in junior scratch races.

I can remember being up there one night when a Bickers bus arrived and out came the Needham team, with their bikes in the back. Amongst them that night was a certain Roy Cooper, now one of our esteemed councillors. Roy tells me it was the first time he set eyes on his future wife, Rita. (The speedway has a lot to answer for.)

We used to stand on the top of the air raid shelter and cheer our heroes on. In later years, boys bought custom-made bikes, which were lighter and quicker.

Life was so simple then, and we thoroughly enjoyed it.

John Hill

15

STOP PRESS: Stowupland Local History Group is still urgently **seeking a new Treasurer**. If you have access to a computer and some experience in this field, **please, please, please** get in touch (see Jerry's contact details above). We know it can be scary joining a new committee, but we are a friendly bunch and work together to keep the group active. What better way to get to know the village than being part of a team caring for its history, **Now is the time to take that step!**