

Hopefully you are reading this in time to join us on **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December** when our guest speaker Kathleen Hallaway will help us “**Explore Tudor Cooking**” in “**Mistress Kathleen’s Kitchen**.” This will be our last meeting in the Village Hall, from February 2026 we have a new home at the URC Hall, so let’s make it a good one.

**IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO JOIN US, THEN HAPPY YULE TIDE GREETINGS FROM SLHG.**



Don't forget we don't meet in January, so our next session is on Wednesday February 4<sup>th</sup> 2026, when we welcome Gerry Barnes to learn about **The Orchards of Eastern England** and their importance to the rural economy and biodiversity. This will be our first meeting in our new venue at the URC Hall.

Looking back to October we welcomed Dr Mike Walker who shared his research into “**The 1173 Seige of Haughley Castle and the sunsequent Battle at Fornham.**”

Neil had conjured up a treat this month of October with this talk from Mike Walker. Thanks to all who turned out for this one on a fairly cold evening. For those of you reading this you may wonder what bearing this had on Stowupland. Well quite a bit, as if things had gone differently the history of the UK as we now know it, may well look a great deal different to what we have today.

**Background:** A revolt began in April 1173, largely due to King Henry II of England his efforts to find lands for his younger son, Prince John. John's three brothers objected to their father's efforts in this area and fled to the court of King Louis VI of France, where they all decided to raise troops for a rebellion. This action resulted in an invasion of Normandy, and the King of Scotland was persuaded to invade UK.

These invasions failed and negotiations also did not end well. As Henry II was holding discussions with Louis at a summit to bring peace, the Earl of Leicester was at the meeting and did not agree with the proposals for peace terms, it is said that he drew his sword on Henry II which was unheard in those days. As you can imagine the meeting broke up fairly quickly with no agreement on peace terms.

Unbeknown to the King, the Earl of Leicester had a fleet waiting with troops embarked and a number of Flemish mercenaries, which was ready to go and they landed at Walton in Suffolk in late September 1173 (Not Walton-on-the-Naze but Suffolk's Walton which is now under the sea.) Things did not start well as this was not received well by the local population and the Flemish troops were not well received in the area at all. Leicester decided to try and join with a number of known rebels. One was Hugh Bigod, the Earl of Norfolk at his castle at Framlingham. This alliance resulted in inconclusive fighting in the area. After this the Earl of Leicester decided to return to his base but was prevented by Royalist Forces under the command of Richard de Lucy, Henry II had placed him in charge of defence of the realm while he was away in France. While Leicester was trying to move his forces back to his base, the Royalist forces had attacked his castle and prevented the rebels from reaching the safety of their base.

**Battle Plans and Tactics:** Strength: Leicester had about 3000 troops, with the time date 17<sup>th</sup> October 1173. With no base the army was roaming the country, looking for provisions and a base. They were being challenged by the Royalist forces under the command of Richard de Lucy. He was supported by 300 mounted knights which were all loyal to the Crown. The knights were well proved in recent combat, in support was the Earl of Norfolk's son with his own supporters. Leicester for some reason decided to split his forces as they were looking for fresh water supplies. The Royalists caught up with

the rebel forces as they were fording the River Lark, near the present villages of Fornham St Genevieve, Fornham All Saints and Fornham St Martin, this about 4 miles from Bury St Edmunds.

Leicester's Cavalry was defeated and many captured by the Royalist Knights, most of his ground troops were driven into the nearby swamps, where they were also attacked by the local population who had not taken kindly to their presence in the area. Leicester and the remaining troops retreated to Fornham All Saints church where they were all captured at about 6 o'clock that evening.

Leicester remained in captivity until his release in January 1177, by which time the King had returned and some of his estate was returned to him, this granted by King Henry II.

Mike also touched on his research into the Cult of St. Edmunds which was fascinating.

I asked Mike at our Q & A session what would have happened if this had resulted, in a rebel victory. Apparently, this may have meant that the rebels could have got stronger and threatened London or gone north and persuaded the King of Scotland to join them. If this had happened it would have presented Henry II with big problems, but as it did not then we shall never know. Sandra thanked Mike for his talk which was excellent, he has more facts and figures than I can include, he also has a well-illustrated book on the subject. Thanks to Liz and Annie for the welcome refreshment.



#### **Do you prefer to listen or to get involved?**

- ✓ Many of our members just enjoy an evening listening to stories from Stowupland's and Suffolk's past.
- ✓ Others like to share their own research about local history, whether about their family, house or our locality.

**Find out what you don't know by coming along to our meetings. If you have any queries about joining us or hearing about Stowupland's past:**

**Please contact Jerry Voden on 01449 703717 or [secretary@stowuplandlocalhistorygroup.org](mailto:secretary@stowuplandlocalhistorygroup.org)**

**Annual Membership are due for renewal or join us as a New Member, visitors welcome.**

#### **OUR 2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

January 2026 – No Meeting

**February 4<sup>th</sup> 2026 – The Orchards of Eastern England**, guest speaker Gerry Barnes

**March 4<sup>th</sup> 2026 – Stowupland Stories 4 – Schools and Education.**

**April 1<sup>st</sup> 2026 – 'Onehouse Paupers Graveyard Project'**, guest speaker Julie Johnson.

**May 6<sup>th</sup> 2026 – 'Medieval Pilgrimages to Woolpit'**, guest speaker Dr Shalena Klazow

**June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2026 – Stowupland Stories 5 – Thorney Green and Stowupland Parish Council.**

**July 1<sup>st</sup> 2026 – The Mendlesham Armoury Through Time**

More events will be added in due course. Please bear in mind it is occasionally necessary for a topic to be changed at the last minute.

Or visit our website: [www.stowuplandlocalhistorygroup.org](http://www.stowuplandlocalhistorygroup.org)

**Still the first Wednesday of each month but in the URC Hall.**



## FROM OUR ARCHIVES

We have written before about the history of Myrtle Cottages. In researching stories for our Stowupland Stories 3 about Crime & Punishment, I found out that Francis Webb who lived there in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century had several brushes with the law. No doubt if Francis's crimes had been committed a decade or two earlier, he would have been sentenced to transportation, as we know that in the early 1840s, 15-year-old Walter Tricker had been sentenced to 14 years transportation. His crime had been stealing 5 tame rabbits.

To return to 25-year-old Francis Webb. In December 1864, the local paper carried a report entitled a '**Clever Capture.**' This read like an episode of a modern-day police drama about how Francis and his accomplice Spencer Ford, aka Mushy were tracked down. Local police knew that two young strangers had arrived at Green Hills in Soham at the beginning of December but although 'the habits of the men attracted the attention of the police [they] could not get a sight of them for some time without exciting suspicion, they therefore patiently awaited a proper opportunity to introduce themselves *a la mode* to the newcomers.' Then one Sunday when the officers were 'settled down to the scent,' Inspector Yardley accompanied by constables Flanders, Barker and Clarke, politely knocked at the cottage door requesting admission, but receiving no answer, repeated the request in an 'unmistakeable manner. The inmates replied, "they were not at home to company at so late an hour'.

'However, the gentlemen in blue were so intent upon a closer acquaintance that after a few minutes partly crash went the door and two of the blue coats presented themselves, at the same moment the back window was smashed out from the inside' but there stood a policeman ready to 'receive the would-be boulder'.

'Both men were secured, and a search of the house found '7 turkeys, 16 fowls, a large tame rabbit all recently killed' and a quantity of feathers and bones. The report concluded that it was suspected that the men had been sending the poultry to dealers in Leadenhall market, in London.

Francis pleaded not guilty but was convicted and sentenced to 7 years penal servitude whilst Mushy who had pleaded guilty was sentenced to 9 months hard labour.