

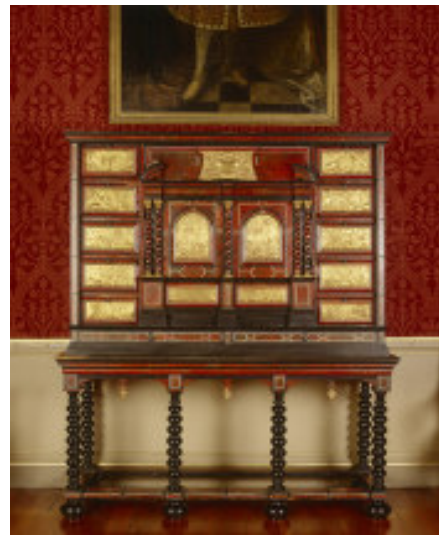
RECENT EVENTS

Hidden Oxburgh

Eighteen members met in the tearooms of Oxburgh Hall on Friday 14 October. Teresa Squires, the House Manager, welcomed our party and, together with her assistants Ilana and Unni van Dort—and after a delicious tea—they treated us to a special guided tour of those parts of the Hall to which visitors are not normally admitted. Eileen Powell was one of the party ...

Before the main part of the tour we divided into groups to visit the areas near the tearoom. We started at the cellars, whose atmosphere hinted at the proximity of the moat. We then visited the old Servants Hall, situated behind the tearoom servery. This, among other features, contained an intriguing chute leading from the upper floors. From there we went to experience the current food preparation area, a challenging crush to be sure! These areas, not open to the public, were a real eye-opener.

We then congregated outside on the bridge to see the workings of the door and the markings on the medieval bricks. We stayed a while in the courtyard learning about the building itself and having pointed out to us various features which I'm sure most of us had missed on previous visits.



The Antwerp Cabinet in the Salon

The next stage of the tour was in the house itself. The South Corridor, the Salon with the superb Antwerp Cabinet (we were fortunate enough to be shown the inside of this magnificent piece of furniture) and on into the Drawing Room. The cabinets here hold many treasures, including an ancient flint tool donated by a local farmer, Henry Lambert.

The library is a treat—the door leading to the dining room is covered with dummy books and when closed gives the room a cosy feeling—a wonderful place to spend many happy hours. We were told about other hidden doors and shown some delightful children's shoes. As we entered the Dining Room we were greeted with a beautifully lit room and a well-set table. The wineglass cooler by each place setting was fascinating. We made our way up the stairs to the Boudoir, where we were shown some old wallpaper samples. The North Room led to the attic stairs—the attic rooms were so tidy the staff are to be congratulated. We went downstairs to the room containing the Marian Hangings—a beautiful display. In the corridor we were shown the "secret wall" behind the wallpaper. We continued up the stairs to the King's Room. The treasures in here are superb. We were shown some original bed hangings which were worked in exquisite embroidery—a rare treat indeed. The tour ended as we made our way back to the ground floor via the Gatehouse spiral stairway.

This certainly was a memorable evening enhanced by the well-informed and expertly delivered talk by Teresa and her staff. Thank you to our three hosts for the evening, and well done to everyone involved in putting on this delightful event.



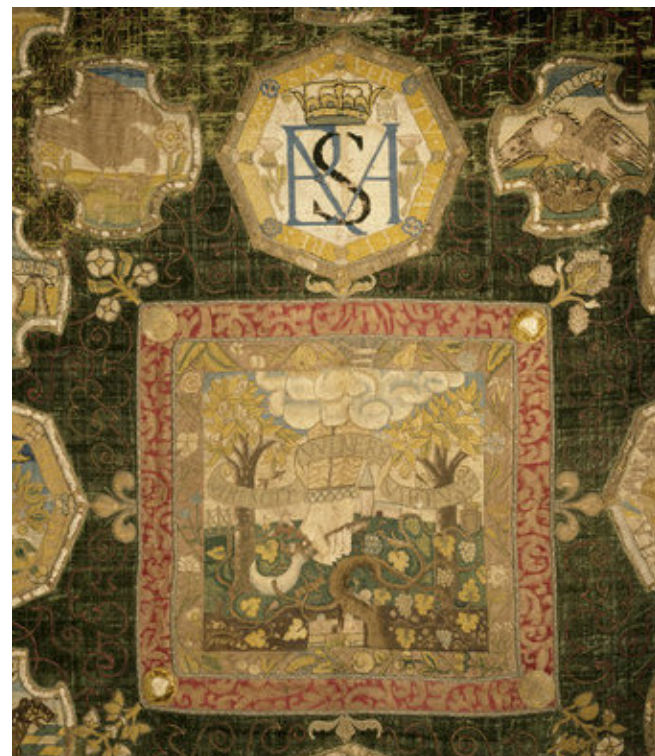
A Christmas Concert

featuring
CLOSE HARMONY

in aid of
**SWAFFHAM & LITCHAM
HOME HOSPICE SUPPORT**
7.30pm

Tuesday 20 December 2011
Houghton Barns, South Pickenham
(signed on the day from the B1077
Ashill-Swaffham road,
east of South Pickenham)
Tickets £10, to include mulled wine
and mince pies.

Available from
Ceres Bookshop, London Rd, Swaffham
and Swaffham & Litcham Home Hospice



Part of one of the Marian Hangings, embroideries attributed to Mary, Queen of Scots and Bess of Hardwick

If you would like to contribute to the Breckland Society Newsletter, please contact the Editor at
The Breckland Society
The Hay Barn, Hall Farm Barns
Oxborough, Norfolk PE33 9PS
Tel 01366 727813
or email liz@dittner.co.uk
www.brecsoc.org.uk



ARCHAEOLOGY ON YOUR DOORSTEP: WHAT TO DO AND WHOM TO ASK!

Over the last few years the Breckland Society has encouraged members to leave their firesides and televisions to become active amateur archaeologists. Members have field-walked in the depths of the winter, scanned the forest on blustery spring days accompanied by metal-detectorists, excavated lodge sites and dug test-pits in the height of summer, and also spent hours washing flints and learning to distinguish worked Neolithic flints from natural stones.

Of course, all these organised events have been under the auspices and keen eyes of professionals who answered questions and guided the uninitiated. But what happens if we stumble across an artefact whilst walking the countryside or digging the garden? To whom should we turn to identify it?

Professional archaeologists based at Gressenhall in Norfolk and at Shire Hall in Bury St Edmunds will do all they can to help and, as members of the national voluntary Portable Antiquities Scheme, they are anxious to encourage the public to report archaeological finds. Write, phone or email for an appointment to visit: staff will be delighted and eager to see what has been found and to answer questions.



Norfolk Historic Environment Service Office at Gressenhall

Any find, such as a flint found in Norfolk, will be examined initially to confirm that it is "worked" flint and not natural stone before being logged on a computer-generated map marking archaeological sites across the county. Gressenhall will wish to borrow the flint for a few weeks so that it can be photographed, examined in detail and recorded by a specialist. It will be returned to the finder with a report on the expert's findings.

Two excellent leaflets on archaeology are available from Gressenhall. *Norfolk Heritage Explorer* explains how you may access

WHAT'S ON

forthcoming Society events

www.brecsoc.org.uk/news-and-events

Friday 18 November 7.30pm

"Writing Bridgham's History": a talk by David O'Neale. David will speak about *Village Life*, the highly-praised book he wrote with Tony Dobbin on the history of Bridgham, and which stands as an exemplar of a local history project. Bridgham Village Hall. Members and Bridgham residents £3, non-members £5, to include refreshments.

Friday 16 December 7 for 7.30pm

Society Christmas Dinner at The Crown, Mundford. Please join us for a festive get-together! The three-course menu includes soup, goat's cheese or prawns, followed by turkey with all the trimmings, steak and stilton, fillet of salmon or vegetable and cashew stroganoff, with Christmas pudding, winter berry vacherin or white chocolate cheesecake to finish. Cost £16 per head, to include a glass of wine. Places strictly limited, so please book with Sue Whittlely (01366 328190) no later than Friday 9 December.

February 2012

We are trying to arrange a private visit to St George's Whisky Distillery at Roudham! Full details to follow in January newsletter.

If you are concerned about driving in the dark, or simply need a lift to a Society event, please contact Sue Whittlely, as it may be possible to arrange transport with other members.

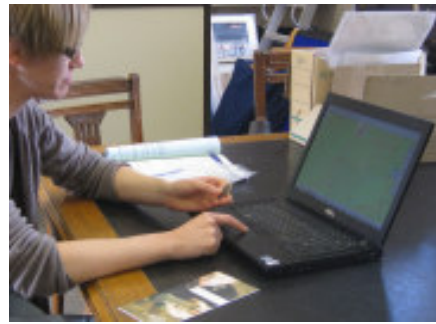
their website (www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk) to search the archaeological map for finds in a particular parish or area. This user-friendly website also allows the public to discover heritage trails, local art inspired by archaeology, activities for children and details of archaeological clubs and societies in Norfolk.

The second publication, *Advice for Finders of Archaeological Objects, including Treasure*, details the do's and don'ts of hunting for ancient remains and artefacts, and offers advice on the use of metal-detectors. The leaflet stresses that, although the law requires objects made of precious metal to be reported to a Coroner, there is no obligation to report other finds but, by reporting all finds, no matter how small, knowledge of the history and archaeology of Britain is increased.

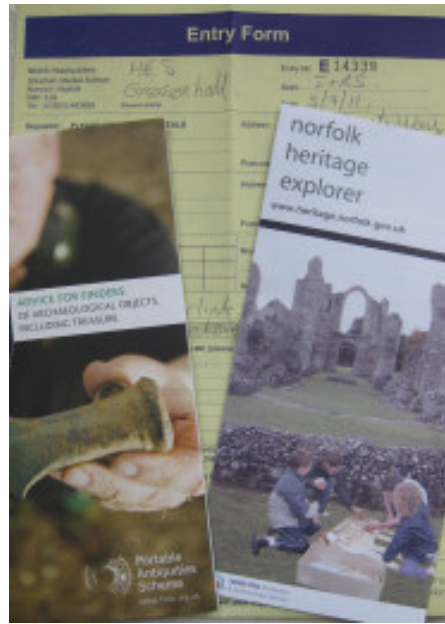
Gressenhall also stores a wealth of photographs and documents on archaeological sites and artefacts found in Norfolk. Anyone wishing to research a particular period, ancient or recent, should contact the staff, who will be happy to arrange a date for private research at the unit.

The Norfolk archaeological unit may be contacted at Norfolk Historic Environment Record, Union House, Gressenhall, Dereham, Norfolk, NR20 4DR. Tel: 01362 860528. Email: heritage@norfolk.gov.uk. Suffolk's archaeological unit may be contacted at Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, 9-10 Churchyard, Shire Hall, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 2AR. Tel: 01284 741230. Email: archaeology@suffolk.gov.uk.

Sue Pennell



Above: Logging the flint on the map



Right: Leaflets and entry form

SOCIETY HELPS FUND LOCAL SCHOOL OUTINGS



Above and right: children feeding the animals at Park Farm, Snettisham

In the last few years the Society has made several donations to charities supported by speakers who have given their time to come and address our members on Brecks-related subjects. More recently, the Society's committee took the decision to extend limited financial support, on a one-off basis, to local causes. The first such grant, for £250, was made to Gooderstone Primary School to help with the increasingly prohibitive cost of school outings. As a result of the donation, Class One were able to visit Swaffham Museum and Park Farm at Snettisham on two separate visits earlier this year. We hope it may be possible to support similar initiatives in the future.



BRECKLAND BOOK FESTIVAL

Breckland's first literary festival continues through November and into December, with a varied and thought-provoking programme of talks, workshops and other activities.

Events to come include

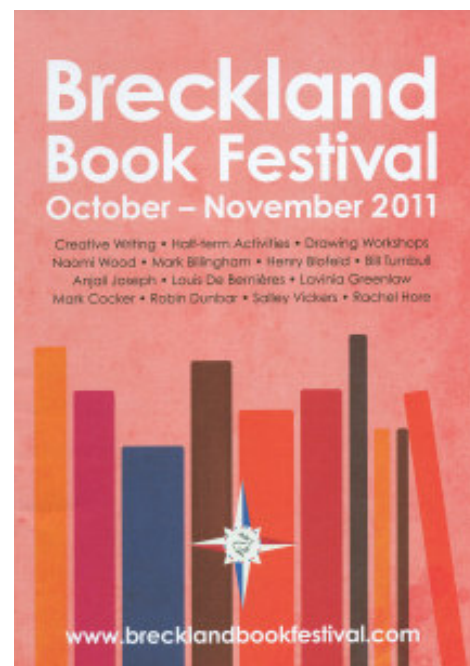
- *On Common Ground*, an evening of stories, songs and music exploring the life and times of the poet John Clare, with master storyteller and wordsmith Hugh Lupton;
- *The Norfolk Landscape as Character* with Rachel Hore, Raffaella Barker and Jeremy Page (author of *Salt*, the highly acclaimed novel about the Norfolk coast);
- *The Bad Beekeeper's Club*, a talk by journalist and TV presenter Bill Turnbull;
- *Life, Death, Love and Art*, an evening with novelist Salley Vickers;

and much else, including a creative writing workshop with Mark McNay.

There is also a series of children's events taking place at venues right across the Breckland area.

Please support as many of these events as you can, or this may well be the first and last of its kind in Breckland!

See www.brecklandbookfestival.com for more details.

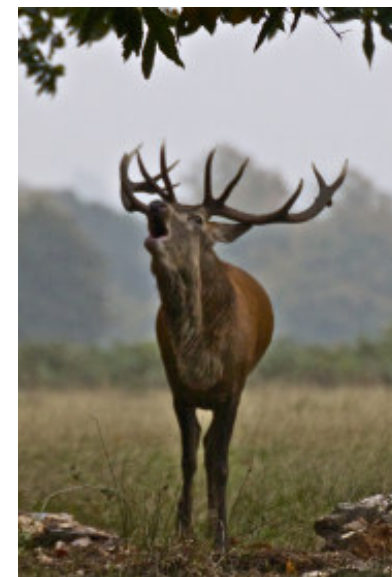


WILDLIFE NEWS

This autumn has been a curious season so far, with unusually warm and dry weather following a rather dismal cool and grey second half to the summer. With temperatures locally hitting 29°C in early October, it felt more like a late June heatwave!

Butterflies have had a rollercoaster ride this year, with the early species enjoying a fantastic spring, but those emerging in the miserable midsummer did not prosper. The welcome sunshine and warmth brought a late flurry, with plenty of Peacocks and Red Admirals around (rather few Small Tortoiseshells, however), as well as a few sightings of Hummingbird Hawkmoths, one of which was seen in Oxborough as late as October 17. There were also very large numbers of Bee Flies about, non-stinging species of fly which mimic bees in order to deter would-be predators!

Reptiles have also benefited from the sunny conditions this autumn, with good numbers of Grass Snakes and Slow-worms reported from various sites across the Brecks. The snakes are especially partial to feeding on frogs, so are often to be found lurking near, or in, garden ponds – they are great swimmers. All reptiles and amphibians will be moving into hibernation shortly, rather later than in some years thanks to the mild conditions. Old compost heaps and piles of leaf litter are favoured overwintering sites.



A Red Deer stag roaring during the rut

The deer rut is in full swing now, and Thetford Forest is a good place to try and see – or at least hear – some of the impressive testosterone-fuelled Red Deer stags. Mature males will roam the forest and farmland seeking females with which to mate, often bellowing loudly to announce their presence. Sparring between rival males is commonplace, and a particularly violent encounter between two large stags was seen on fields near Mundford on 2 October. Deer numbers locally have increased by 30 per cent in the last few years, and with Red and Roe Deer often seen grazing together with the ubiquitous Muntjac never far away, at times we get a glimpse of a more primeval landscape (minus the Muntjac, of course) – all we need are a few reintroduced wolves to keep the numbers down!

Many birds are on the move right now, and despite the warm weather most of our regular winter visitors have arrived. The hedgerows are full of Redwings and Fieldfares, as well as Blackbirds – the latter are probably Scandinavian birds, as many of the locally-bred Blackbirds and Song Thrushes will have headed south to Iberia for the winter. Meanwhile, raptor sightings have been excellent lately. Buzzards continue to spread across the Brecks and are now a common sight, with Red Kites turning up regularly too. A late Osprey was seen over Thetford on 14 October and a Marsh Harrier near Oxborough the day after.

Meanwhile, keep an eye out for Short-eared Owls – large numbers have headed across the North Sea from Scandinavia, presumably because rodent supplies there were dwindling. Up to 46 of these magnificent birds, which often hunt in daylight, were seen in one day at RSPB Titchwell up on the coast! It is only a matter of time before some of them move inland and hopefully spend the winter in our area.



Look out for the distinctive fluttering flight of Short-eared Owls as they quarter fields in search of voles and mice

COMMITTEE VACANCIES: ARE YOU INTERESTED IN HELPING TO RUN THE SOCIETY?

Members who attended the AGM in May will recall the announcement that two members of the Society's Committee will be standing down in a few months' time. Our Treasurer John Davies and Secretary Sue Whittlely have held their respective posts ever since the Society was founded in 2003 and much of our success through the years has been thanks to their hard work and commitment. We have had some interest in the Treasurer's position, but are still on the hunt for a new Secretary to replace Sue in spring 2012. So how about stepping in? The post of Secretary is key to the running of the Society and plays an important role in organising our events and keeping the show on the road. You would be joining a lively and friendly Committee and helping to direct the future of the Society.

If you are interested in finding out informally more about what's involved, then please contact James Parry on 01366 328676. **The Society will continue to thrive only if its members play an active role in its daily administration, so do please consider helping us.**