



# Longstanton & District Heritage Society

Protecting and Promoting  
the Heritage of  
Longstanton & District

## NEWSLETTER

No. 6 September, 2013

### RAF Oakington's Association with The Great Escape

Charles Lofthouse and Denis Cayford were among the members of 7 Squadron who were imprisoned in Stalag Luft III during WWII. Pilot Charles and Navigator Denis were shot down in their Lancaster over Berlin in August 1943. Along with the crew, they both managed to escape the burning aircraft before being captured and interned within Stalag Luft III along with



Charles Lofthouse, DFC



Denis Cayford, DFC

was near the end of the tunnel when the guards discovered men outside the wire, but he managed to re-enter the hut before the Germans arrived. His bid for freedom had failed, saving his life but forcing him to live with the tragic aftermath. Hitler was incensed and subsequently ordered 50 of the recaptured men to be executed; only three men actually made it home.

However, in the winter 1944/45, in the last months of WWII, those prisoners of Stalag Luft 3 that were left "couldn't know that one of the worst hardships of their prisoner of war time was waiting for them. The prisoners were marched out to an unknown destination. The forced marches would become one of the Second World War's most extraordinary feats of endurance amid extreme privation and suffering. Driven from concentration camps and prisoner of war camps, a quarter of a million prisoners stumbled and shuffled their way to the west, without adequate food, shelter or clothing in the bitterest winter Germany had experienced in 50 years.

It was not until the very last stages of the war that the prisoners were liberated by the Allied fighting forces and could taste freedom again...

Due to the fact that airmen of Oakington, and their station commander were imprisoned at Stalag Luft 3, this airbase and prisoner of war camp are linked forever. These facts prove that the former "Oakington" airbase is part of British history of World War III which we never must allow to erode."

**Ben van Drogenbroek**



Stalag Luft 3, built on sand, thought to escape proof!

Review of a book by a Dutch LDHS member:

### 'The Camera Became My Passport Home' Stalag Luft 3, The Great Escape by Ben van Drogenbroek



Ben's three volume hardback coffee-table book-set

Stalag Luft 3 was a German prisoner of war camp for Allied Air Force Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers. This camp became known because of two famous escapes; The Wooden Horse Escape and **The Great Escape**. These, and other escapes, are thoroughly documented in the book.

This three volume hardcover coffee-table book-set totally 526 pages and more than 500 illustrations (photographs, drawings and maps) is a comprehensive history of Stalag Luft 3. Printed in full-colour on glossy paper, a certificate with each numbered set is included. Worth every penny of is £160.00, this product of 'a labour of love' took six years of Ben's spare time researching, type-setting and laying out to produce. Each copy is numbered and signed by the author. Ben has very generously gifted a copy of this book to Longstanton & District Heritage Society.



Over 500 illustrations (photos, drawings and maps)

### Cambridge Antiquarian Society Open Day to Visit Oakington Anglo Saxon Excavations

On Saturday 29 June several LDHS members took the opportunity of their Associate Membership, to visit this extremely important burial site.



2013 archaeological excavations at Oakington



LDHS member John Fletcher and his granddaughter



One of a number of Anglo Saxon burials recently exposed



Oakington Community Centre temporarily exhibited material from previous excavations

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Photographs LDHS via Hilary Stroude

## Birth of Northstowe! Time to be Vigilant

With the final arrival of summer, it was sad to reflect that Longstanton's well respected golf course is now closed to golfers. This also signals the likely disruption of public footpaths and the certain disruption of established **wildlife**, as in the case of the Home Farm development. No doubt the heavy machinery and earth-moving equipment will soon be arriving putting in danger many of the archaeological remains hidden only metres below the surface.



Photo LDHS via Jeff Harrison

Woodpecker

Please take as many

photographs as you can of the situation as it develops. LDHS will be please to receive copies to archive in your name.

In the meantime, we

have recorded our memories of those well-kept greens that gave pleasure to both golfers and those who enjoyed the golf course footpaths.



Photo LDHS via Hilary Stroude

Memories of well kept greens

### The final swing for golfer on town site



Cambridge News, 31/5/2013

## Hilary Stroude, LDHS Secretary and CAS Publicity Officer

One of the founding members of LDHS, and Secretary of the heritage society, since it's launch in May 2007, Hilary Stroude has, for the last 3 years, been a member of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society Council. Charged with organising publicity Hilary has now been formerly appointed CAS Publicity Officer. In addition to her LDHS role, Hilary's association with CAS has raised the profile of the heritage society and has proved invaluable over the last few years.

## Museum Within the Heritage Core



Photo LDHS via Hilary Stroude

Guard House, potential Museum?

LDHS remains fully committed to ensuring that the Objects of the heritage society are achieved and a museum is provided as part of the Northstowe development.

This will enable our Iron Age,

Roman, Anglo Saxon, Medieval, World War 2 and post war histories to be preserved for future generations of Longstanton, Oakington and Northstowe.

### Longstanton & District Heritage Society

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## Once Again this Year LDHS Offered Six Public Talks

September 7th, 2012 'Longstanton Station & It's Railway' - Roy Stoner. A well thought out talk on a history of the line between Cambridge, Kettering and March.

October 7th, 'LDHS, Your Archive' - Hilary Stroude. This proved to be an enjoyable trip down memory lane for many in our audience that evening and a chance to show just some of photographs in your LDHS archive.

November 4th, 'Community Archaeology' - Jo Richards from 'Jigsaw', the community arm of Oxford Archaeology at Bar Hill. Jo gave a professional presentation designed to encourage local groups of amateur 'archaeologists' to 'dig' in their own backyards in a way in which their finds could be expertly identified.

5 March, 2013 'Longstanton & It's Railways' - Roy Stoner. Roy revealed he, along with Hilary Stroude, he had uncovered aborted plans, in 1901, for a light railway that was to connect Oakington to Cottenham and an earlier aborted line, that would have bisected Longstanton by a massive junction!

5 April, 'Neolithic Sites in East Anglia' - Paul Daws. An illuminating insight in the distribution of local Neolithic settlements and their ability to communicate with others across great parts of southern England many years BC even before the pyramids were built in Egypt!!

6 May, 'Hobson's Choice' - John Rees. We invited Hobson's Voice, a folk group from Over, to entertain us! All their songs related either to local people, events or customs and gave a refreshingly new aural perspective to our local heritage.

## Scheduled talks for Autumn 2013

6 September, AGM followed by 'The Great Escape & RAF Oakington's Association' - Tony Cowley.

4 October, The Garden House Riot (1970) - Peter Searby.

1 November, '1st Eastern General Hospital' - Philomena Guilbaud.

(hopefully, this last talk for 2013, will awaken memories from living relatives of those who either served in WWI or were injured or worked as staff at the hospital)



LDHS via Philomena Guilbaud

Massive Site created west of Cambridge currently occupied by the University Library

## Going Forward

LDHS will continue to lobby, as required, all stakeholders and interested parties who may be able to help us achieve our goals. This includes, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), who are currently drawing up the Northstowe Phase 2 plans, as well as CCC archaeologists, SCDC and members of local government. We will continue to archive information and use our archives for public education and enjoyment.

**LDHS would like to encourage our members to spread the word and encourage others to join the society. A strong membership is more vital than ever at this critical period in the history of our villages.**