

# GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

Free to members,  
50p where sold

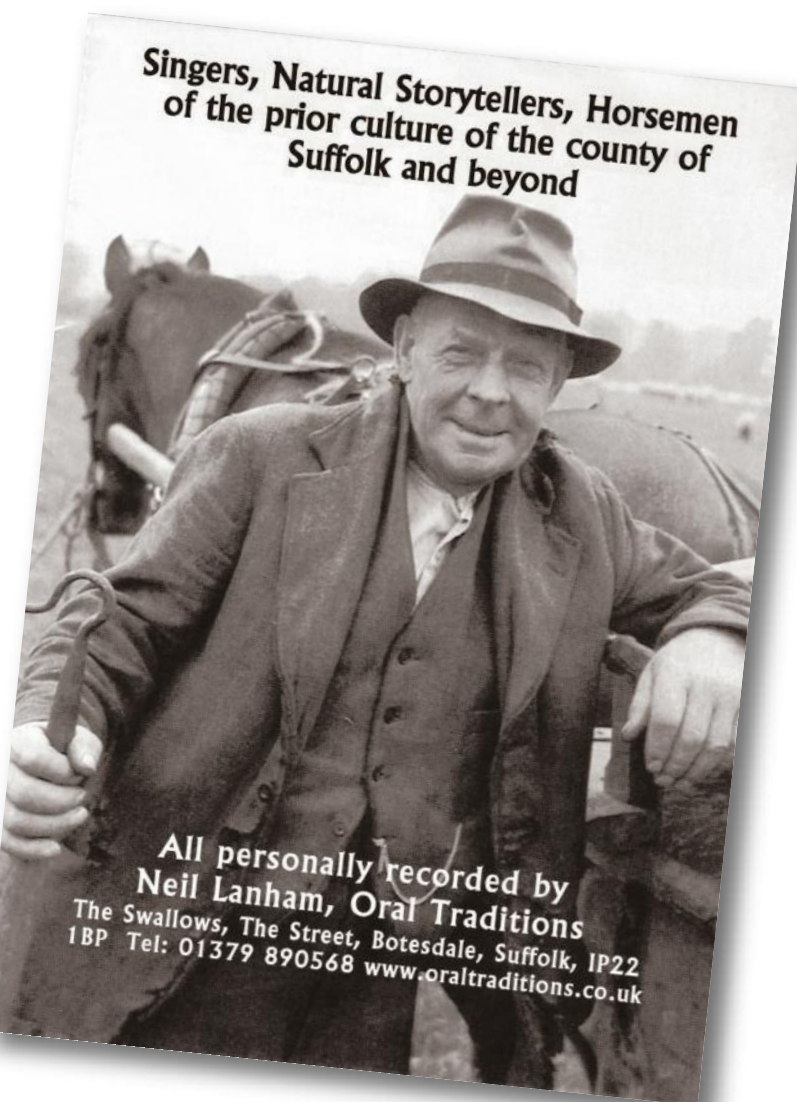
SPRING 2011

The Society has indeed been kept busy throughout the Winter months as Steve Clark suggested it might be in his guest editorial for the 'Celebration' issue. Apart from our regular monthly meetings, Mr and Mrs George Grover warmly welcomed members to their home for the Christmas social gathering which included a musical entertainment and reminiscences of members' Christmases spent abroad.

Neil Lanham, who I once knew as an auctioneer, has spent many years building up an oral history of East Anglian life. This Library can now be purchased as a series of CDs and DVDs. Neil has kindly presented the Society with two recordings of local 'celebrities' and we hope to play extracts from the CDs at a future meeting. In the meantime, leaflets are available from which you can make your own orders.

Margaret King has been in correspondence with David Bloomfield of Brentwood who is a closely connected with Henry Kolle, founder of the Horse Hair Manufactory in Glemsford. David has been researching the history of the business at the Bury Record Office and has presented copies of his findings to the Society. You will find a resumé of this material elsewhere in this issue.

Finally, no mention has yet been made in these newsletters of the amazing archaeological artefacts discovered during the last few years in our village. The Roman Lantern now resides in



Ipswich Museum while the iron age bead is still awaiting a home. Is there anybody willing to write an account of these discoveries for a future newsletter?

**Robin Ford**, Editor



**President:**  
George Grover

**Chairman:**  
Patrick Currie

**Treasurer:**  
Rowland Hill

**Secretary:**  
Margaret King  
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# The Glemsford Crane



During the final years of the Stour Valley Railway, just one employee of British Railways (Eastern Region) worked at Glemsford Station. He was George Honeywood, the signalman.

Goods trains would stop and load crates of plastic Domestos bottles (without caps) which were being produced at the then HOLPAC factory. Agricultural machinery was also unloaded for the firm of Colman that operated from Houghton Hall Farm, Cavendish.

The crane, depicted in Sid Watkinson's painting, was still in use. Sometime after the closure of the freight service in 1966, the crane was acquired by Colman's and removed to Houghton Hall Farm. It was fitted with an electric motor and continued in use for many years despite the purchase by the firm of a fork-lift truck.

Finally the business moved to Ballingdon and the crane was donated in 2004 to

Clare Country Park by Mr. Robert Wise of Houghton Hall Farm.

Unfortunately, while the crane was being dismantled ready for transportation by the Clare Railway Society, the big wheel, seen in the painting, was broken. It was hoped, at the time, that a repair to the wheel could be effected. However, the crane now stands on its brick plinth at one end of the Clare engine shed still in a sadly incomplete state.

Having written the piece on the crane towards the end of last year, the present round of cuts affecting picnic sites and country parks hadn't yet registered with me. Now that the Glemsford picnic site has already been closed and Clare Country Park, Rodbridge and the 'Railway Walks' (all places lying along or close to the old railway line) are threatened with a similar fate, I cannot help thinking that history is once again repeating itself.

## FROM THE SUFFOLK AND ESSEX FREE PRESS

Sid Watkinson has kindly delved into his press archives again for this entry:

### **June 30th 1866.**

On the 1st of June, Glemsford as a passenger station appeared for the first time on the railway timetable.



Illustration by kind permission of **Sid Watkinson**



# Henry Kolle & Son LONDON

## The History of a family of Horsehair Manufacturers

The following short article does not do justice to David Bloomfield's detailed notes. For example, I have not included two pages of names of Glemsford people, employed in the horsehair and mat making manufactories, that he has extracted from the 19th Century Trade Directories. I apologise for any factual omissions and errors, and I hope David enjoys the illustration from a 19th century French fashion print.

Henry Kolle's name first appeared in a London Trade Directory for 1794. He was described as a merchant. In 1836, Henry Kolle died leaving the business to his son John Henry who had been made a partner the year previously. Eventually, a younger son, Charles Edward, would also become a partner. In 1838, the firm of Henry Kolle and Son was entered for the first time in the Directories as 'Horsehair manufacturers and Merchants'.

According to Richard Deeks, in his book *The Mat Maker and the Magistrate*, a horsehair factory was founded in Glemsford in 1844. By 1848, Messrs Kolle Ltd owned such a factory in the village (Bloomfield); and in an 1855 Directory for Glemsford, the entry for Kolle and Son read as follows: "Horsehair seating, curled hair and coconut fibre matting etc... and London".

By 1869, further manufactories had been opened in Haverhill and Clare. At Haverhill, the firm also manufactured crinoline which was a stiff fabric, made from flax and horsehair, that was placed as an under layer over the crinoline frame. However, both these manufactories were sold off before 1879.

Throughout much of this period, John Henry Kolle lived in Tottenham and Edmonton from where he probably ran the business. In 1871, he moved to Upper Tooting. Charles Edward Kolle lived at one time at a house called "Egremont" in Tulse Hill, and David wonders whether the name has any connection with Egremont Street in Glemsford.

After the deaths of John Henry Kolle in 1869 and Charles Edward Kolle in 1875,



the business was probably carried on by Charles Edward's son, another Charles Edward. In 1906, a severe fire broke out at the Glemsford factory premises of Messrs H Kolle and Son, Ltd, and the incident was reported in the Bury Free Press for the 4th of April.

The final Glemsford reference to Kolle H. and Son appeared in Kelleys Directory for 1908 where the firm was described as "hair seating and cocoa nut matting manufacturers". The factory was probably sold soon after this date. The second Charles Edward died in 1927.

# GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY News



THE NOVEMBER AGM saw around 50 members gather together to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Society.

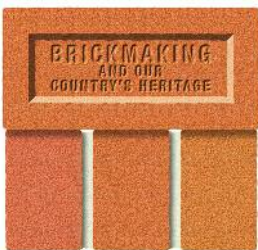
We welcomed, as our very special guest, one of the co-founders, Chris Britton, along with first committee members Cordelia Hamilton (Treasurer), and Sid Watkinson. Following official business, a finger buffet (thank you Pauline!) with wine was enjoyed by all.

A truly fascinating collection of locally found fossils and flints was displayed by member Brian Smith whose research has led him to discover that the two flints, one a Mesolithic axe head, the other a Lithic implement, date back to many thousands of years BC. Sue Smith exhibited a number of photographs taken on the Glemsford Silk Mill's closure day in April while the official celebration Newsletter was distributed.

A definite highlight of the evening was the customised DVD sent by fellow founder member and first Secretary, Steve Clarke, now living in the Isle of Skye. It featured beautiful views from his new home, plus many scenes of Glemsford, all captioned by intriguing comments and some historical queries. Thank you, Steve.

Finally, memories of 1990 -1991, the Society's first year, were evoked by committee members.

The evening closed with sparkling wine and slices of a commemorative cake baked and decorated by Anna Watkinson. Very many thanks to all who helped (too many to mention) to make this such a successful evening.



A talk by Peter Minter

A DAMP JANUARY evening did not deter an attendance of 46 old and new members and visitors coming to hear Peter Minter from the Bulmer Brickworks speak on the subject of "Brickmaking and our Country's Heritage".

His brickyard has a very long history, its Thames Basin clay dating back some 40 million years. Excavations revealing sharks' teeth, flint implements and arrowheads demonstrate an early occupation of the site and this was further enforced by a find of a Bronze Age burial urn and a 15th century tile kiln. This most versatile clay has been worked regularly in brick-making since the 1700s and fortunately there is still plenty available.

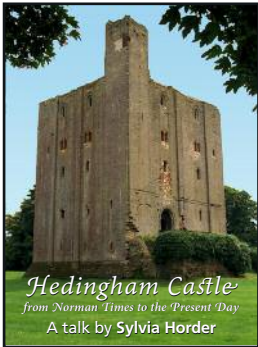
Illustrating his talk with slides, Peter showed how the clay is dug, made in to bricks, tiles and other more decorative bespoke and often terracotta structures, then laid out to dry before being fired in one of his two specially built kilns. These

are still traditionally coal-fired, each capable of holding 12,000 bricks.

Projects undertaken by Bulmer Brickworks are many and varied; most famously has been the years spent in restoration on Hampton Court, its brickwork and its 365 chimneys! Other well-known sites have included Simon of Sudbury's gate in Sudbury, St. Nicholas' chapel near Coggeshall, Thorrington Hall chimneys, Helmingham Hall, Bury St. Edmunds' rail station, Layer Marney Towers and the largest contract of them all - St. Pancras station.

The pictures show remarkable attention to restorative detail and how heartening to think that a local specialist firm is doing so much to preserve these and other great buildings for the benefit of future generations.

Thank you Peter, for a most informative and interesting talk.



SYLVIA HORDER, our speaker for February, entertained us with a very lively and punchy talk about Hedingham Castle, a building she knows intimately having worked there for many years giving talks to children and young people.

The castle keep which remains standing today towers 100 feet high; it boasts four floors, their uses varying from soldiers' garrison to dormitories and banqueting hall; it was built as a dry-moated, defensive structure following the Norman conquest and given by William I to Aubrey de Vere, one of his knights.

The de Veres, and later their descendants the Earls of Oxford, held sway here until the mid 17th century when the male line died out and the female successor married the Duke of Albany, one of the illegitimate sons of Charles II and Nell Gwyn: from this union has descended the Lindsey line who still own and run the castle.

Apart from the educational visits, the castle now hosts weddings, meetings and special events.

Down through the centuries many famous people have been connected with the castle – William the Conqueror of course, himself a most interesting personality, the infamous King John who laid siege, both Henry VII and VIII and (it goes almost without saying) Queen Elizabeth visited!

However the lady most associated with Hedingham Castle was doubtlessly the Empress Matilda, the highly intelligent and well-educated eldest daughter of Henry I whose rightful, but unfortunately female, claim to the throne was dismissed, the crown taken by her cousin Stephen thus giving rise to nine years of bitter civil war. Matilda is obviously a favourite of Sylvia's as she often takes her as a role-play model adopting her costumes and describing her most fascinating life in absorbing detail.

**Margaret King**

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## The Railway issue

Sadly, I have not received enough material to make the promised *Special Railway Issue* viable. The issue was to have been centred around the recollections of Celia Hall, who spent part of her childhood living at the Station House.

Her reminiscences amount to a substantial body of work and will be published in parts over the next few editions of the newsletter, and I would love to hear from any reader whose memory of the line has been reawakened by Celia's writing.

### A request from Sid Watkinson

**Wanted:** Any letterheads, invoices or business cards of Glemsford-based tradesmen, businesses or commercial enterprises etc: old and new. Please forward to Sid.

Please note the changes  
to our 2011 programme  
as follows:

## PROGRAMME 2011

Thursday **Barrie Stevenson:** Antiques Roadshow.  
April 14th (Only one item per person; no valuations given.)

Thursday **David Eddershaw:** Pakenham Watermill.  
May 12th **NB.** This meeting will be held at the Social Club.

Thursday **A Summer Evening Outing to**  
June 9th **Pakenham Watermill** for a guided tour.

Sunday **A Summer's Evening Function –**  
July 17th By courtesy of the President.