



# Newsletter



Great Yarmouth Local History & Archaeological Society



April 2020

## The Picture of Yarmouth Project: 200 Years of Built Heritage Progress Report



Our Heritage Funded project on the buildings of Great Yarmouth completed its first phase in January when the results of the survey to find out which

additional buildings the people of Yarmouth wanted in the new book were announced at our monthly meeting. These buildings were:

*These buildings can be found in Preston's Picture of Yarmouth but no longer exist:*

1. Children's Hospital
2. Bathhouse and Jetty\*
3. The Theatre and Regal Cinema

*These buildings do not appear in Preston's Picture of Yarmouth, many having been built after 1819. They still exist:*

4. Hippodrome
5. The Winter Gardens
6. Venetian Waterways
7. Municipal School of Art

*These buildings do not appear in Preston's Picture of Yarmouth, many having been built after 1819. They no longer exist.*

8. Lacon's Brewery
9. The Britannia Pier
10. Smith's Potato Crisp Factory

*These buildings may be regarded as 'modern' and could be remembered in the future.*

11. Ecclestone Public Houses\*
12. The Atlantis & Oasis Ballroom

13. The Outer Harbour

*Additional buildings chosen by the survey*

14. The Town Hall

15. Wind-mills

16. The Two Bears Hotel

We have had a great response from members to write chapters on these buildings but still have a few gaps (marked with a \* on the list above). If you think you can write on one of these buildings, or help us with the History Fair, then please get in touch by filling the form in found at: <http://bit.ly/PofYvolunteer> or give Gareth a ring on 07545922515.

## Society Meetings and the Coronavirus

In view of the recent government advice regarding Coronavirus the Society's Committee has decided to cancel next Friday's (20<sup>th</sup> March, 2020) and future meetings of the society until further notice. The well-being of our members is very important and we do not want to impose or add unnecessary risks at this difficult time. Please check our website for further updates GYLHAS Website. Meanwhile, stay safe and we look forward to reconvening in the near future.

# YHAC's visit to the RAF Air Defence Radar Museum at Neatishead



Our Young Archaeologists have been learning about World War Two recently so were thrilled to visit the RAF Air Defence Radar Museum at Neatishead to find out about all about the secret listening stations along the Norfolk coast.

We visited the communications room where the museum volunteers showed us how the radar stations operated and we found out how the signals were used to scramble fighter planes during the Battle of Britain. We also got to plot incoming planes on the tabletop and discovered how the coloured arrows matched up to the coloured sections on the sector clock. Some of the young people took up the invitation to sit in a Jaguar cockpit where they were amazed at the number of instruments, while others were happier in the comfort of the rejected ejector seat!

In the Cold War room we were shown a film of the suspected Russian espionage tactics during the Cold War and we explored some of the equipment which the British and Nato used to counteract them. We were surprised at how little computing power was available to the 'Superpowers' in that era and astonished to learn that our mobile phones today hold more computer storage than the entire base used.



Thanks to the team at RAF Radar Museum for showing us around and also to society members Ann Dunning, Glenda Wells and Una Watson for helping lead the group.

*Patricia Day*

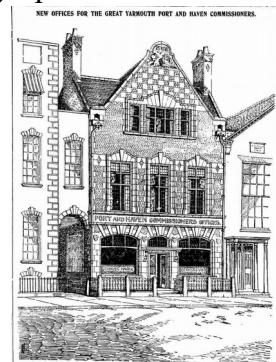
## Postponement of the 2020 History Fair

As with this year's Great Yarmouth Arts Festival, the planned History Fair due to be held at the same time has been postponed indefinitely. However, work for the Preston book about the buildings of Yarmouth is still going ahead. There are

some chapters that still need to be written. If you would like the opportunity to volunteer to write one of these remaining chapters in the book, then please look at article written by Gareth Davies on the first page.

## Port and Haven Commissioners Offices, South Quay

Now a private residence, the Port and Haven Commissioners Offices located at 21 South Quay were officially opened in September 1909. The building was designed by the architects Olley & Haward and is next door to what was



the old Custom House. The Customs House itself was built in 1720 and was originally constructed as a merchants house for John Andrews. It was then subsequently purchased by the government in 1802 and was used as a customs house. In 1986 it was bought by the Great Yarmouth Port Authority and a joining passageway was built between it and the Commissioners Offices. The Old Customs House displayed the H.M. Customs Coat Of Arms above the porch. When these were restored in 1993 by the Great Yarmouth Port Authority the arms were remounted on the

front wall. EastPort UK, which took on the responsibilities of the Port Authority, moved to South Beach Parade in August 2009 and the buildings stood empty for three years before being put up for auction in July 2012. The Commissioners Offices are listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as a Grade 2 building because of its architectural and historic interest.

The Port and Haven Commissioners came into being in 1670 and were established to repair and maintain the Yarmouth Haven and Pier. This work was to be funded by dues that were levied on incoming goods. Originally, eight Commissioners were appointed, two each representing the towns of Yarmouth and Norwich and the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk. To begin with, the Commissioners were to be responsible for the Haven for ten years only, but their powers were regularly renewed by a series of Acts of Parliament until 1835. Beginning in 1721 the Commissioners were given the responsibility for the navigable rivers flowing into Yarmouth Haven and money was spent on the upkeep of the Rivers Yare, Bure and Waveney as well as the Haven itself. Responsibility overseeing the expenditure of this funding to improve and maintain the rivers was given to the Commissioners from each of the constituent authorities. An exemption to this arrangement was that part of the River Waveney between Beccles and Bungay which was covered by a separate Private Act of Parliament.

Prior to 1835 executive power was largely in the hands of the constituent authorities, with Yarmouth's Town Clerk taking on the role of the Commissioners' Clerk and the Borough Chamberlains acted as the financial officers. In 1835 the Port and Haven Commission was separated from the Yarmouth Corporation and from then on they appointed their own officers and executive committees, a Standing Committee and a Committee of Survey. Acts of Parliament passed in 1835 and in 1866 allowed for elected representatives to be added to their number and the local port dues which had been collected by Yarmouth Corporation were transferred to the Commissioners.



In 1911 the Commissioners took on the control of the Corporation's Fishwharf as part of the planned dock development that was to take place in the South Denes area of Yarmouth.

The Offices were built with red bricks with a south return wall constructed of 16<sup>th</sup> Century brick. The frontage of the

building is knapped Quarry and Quaternary flint which is dressed with Lincolnshire Limestone. The three-storey facade rises to a gable facing the street. The gable-head is of chequered stone and flint and rises to an arched apex with the date 1909 and a relief representation of a steamship. The main gable behind has a north and south gable-end stack. The wall at the side incorporates part of what was known as the Old Dutch chapel.

Internally there were ground floor front offices with glass and



timber partitions, including the cash office for payment of port dues. There was a staircase in Jacobean style with a closed string, splat balusters and moulded square newels. On the first-floor at the



front was the boardroom which had small-framed panelling and a ribbed plaster ceiling of simple geometric patterns.

At the formal opening of the Offices on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1909, the chairman of the Commission, Mr. Russell Colman, presided over a well attended lunch in the Board room. At the preceding

Commissioners monthly meeting, a Mr. J. F. Crisp presented to the Chairman a silver key to open the new offices doors. After unlocking the doors the Chairman led the way to the Board Room. Those attending the lunch included the Mayor of Yarmouth (Mr C A Campling), the Deputy Mayor (Mr Frank Arnold), the Mayor and Sheriff of Norwich, the Mayor of Beccles, Alderman C N Brown, Mr Q Jewson and Mr J Farrar Ranson. The Chairman first proposed "The Squire of Norfolk—the King.", followed by a toast to the "Prosperity to the Trade and Commerce of Great Yarmouth," after which the Chairman welcomed those present into what he described as being the Commissioners' 'first real home'.

*Michael Wadsworth*

## The former Middlegate Congregational Church, now Greyfriars House

What is now the Council offices called Greyfriars House on Greyfriars Way was the Middlegate Congregational Church. Construction of the present building, designed by the local architect J T Bottle, was started in 1870 (the building was not fully completed until 1876). The cost of construction came to £3,500. A lecture hall, designed by the same architect, was added at the back of the church in 1879 and a Sunday School was also added to its side. The building became a Grade 2 listed building in August 1974. In 1990 the conversion into offices was completion with the design of the conversion being done by the architect Peter Codling. In October 1989 during the conversion, beneath the ground floor a large block of honey coloured stone, which had been worked was found. At the time it was thought that it was part of an undercroft of the church, but this now seems to be unlikely. What was the rear lecture hall was damaged by fire in 1999.

The church was built with cut flint with ashlar dressings and the crown post roof has been described as being interestingly ornate. Built with a wide nave with two doorways, which are now windows, with a large five geometric light west window above what were the two doors. Internally, some of the plaques remain including the memorial to those who once worshiped in the church who had been killed in the First World War. Outside



the staff entrance to the south side of the building are some grave stones of those who were members of the congregation.

Built on the site of a pre-existing meeting house said to be on the 1758 map of Yarmouth drawn by Henry Swinden. There is evidence that on or very near the site there was also an office of fish-houses and a garden. In 1752 the site was conveyed, along with the Meeting House, to Trustees. In 1788 and in 1811, it was conveyed to new Trustees. There is a certificate dating from 1733 from the Bishop's Registry that 'the New Built house Scituate in the Middle street ... is a place intended to be set apart for the Exercise of Religious Worship for divers of His Majesties Protestant subjects dissenting from the Church of England'.

In 1972 the Congregational Church in England came together with the English Presbyterian Church to form the United Reformed Church, although some Congregational Churches decided to form the Congregational Federation. Within Yarmouth, the United Reformed Church joined with the Methodist based at the Deneside Central Hall and the joint place of worship became Christchurch. The Middlegate Church was sold to pay for the alterations seen as being necessary for Christchurch. Interestingly, the Methodist Deneside Central Hall was built on land that the Congregational Church had used before it moved to Middlegate Street.

*Michael Wadsworth*