

SUFFOLK GHOSTS & LEGENDS

Scandals, Sieges and Spooks

Pamela Brooks

The ancient buildings that stand in the Suffolk landscape are often associated with the supernatural and stories of strange events. In this book author Pamela Brooks visits the castle and priories, often now in ruins, which themselves have long histories entwined with fascinating tales of strange goings-on and mysterious apparitions. Herself a self-confessed 'addict of ruins and ancient buildings' the author encourages, where public access is allowed, her readers to visit for themselves these places – with the warning to be wary! Here lurk the spirits of murdered monarchs, ghostly grey monks and saints seeking revenge!

Over forty sites are covered, including:

Bury St Edmunds • Clare Priory • Lowestoft
Witches' Stones • Haughley Castle • Leiston
Abbey • Orford Castle • Eye Priory • Bungay
Castle • Sibton Abbey • Framlingham Castle •
Wingfield Castle • Bures St Mary • Martello
Towers • And many more.

Along with these terrifying tales the author imparts more serious historic information and illustrations regarding these important sites and readers will find here as much to fascinate them as to fear.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pamela Brooks is a freelance author, historian and journalist who grew up in Norfolk and, following a degree in English, has lived in Norwich for over 20 years. She has written several books on the history of Norfolk and Norwich, and also writes romantic fiction as Kate Hardy; she was shortlisted for the Romantic Novelists' Association Romance Prize in 2006 and 2009, and won it in 2008. She lives with her husband, two children, a Springer spaniel, and too many books to count!

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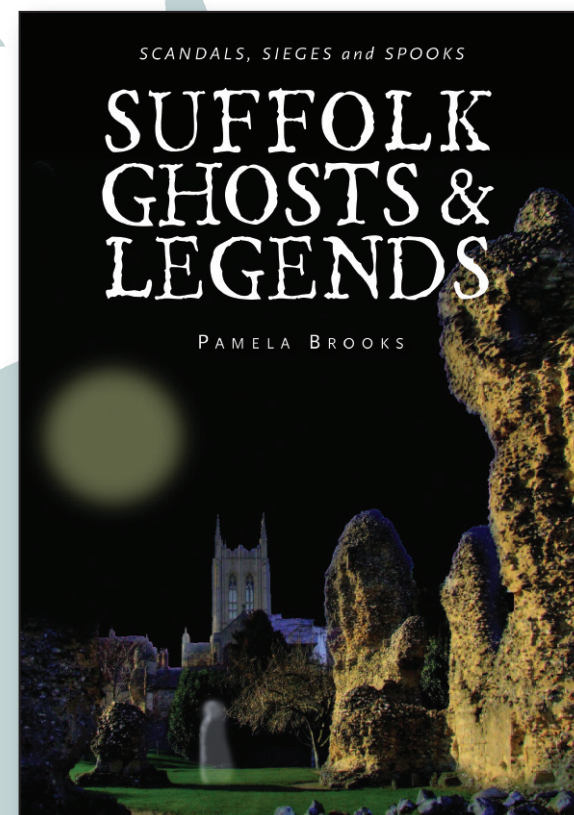
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HALSGROVE TITLE INFORMATION



Format: Paperback, 160 pages, 210x148mm
profusely illustrated with black and white photographs
Price: £8.99
ISBN: 978 1 84114 867 0
Imprint: Halsgrove
Published: June 2009



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The Bures 'dragon' – stained glass window from St Andrew's Church, Wormingford.



The gatehouse at Dunwich Greyfriars.



Replica of the helmet found at Sutton Hoo.



Alabaster effigy of John de la Pole resting on the head of his Saracen enemy, Wingfield church.

Blythburgh Priory



Blythburgh church. Photograph by author.

The ruins of Blythburgh Priory are not far from Blythburgh church (OS map reference: TM 419 7540), now on private land. They are not open to the public.

The beginnings of the priory

The priory was an Augustinian priory; it was founded some time before 1135 as a cell of St Cyril's Priory in Essex, originally for three canons. Up to seven canons lived there at one point, but when the priory was dissolved in 1537 only four canons and the prior lived there.

In 1327 it was said to be the twenty-first richest community in Suffolk. Bishop Nix's visitation in June 1528 was attended by John Righton, the prior; Thomas Chapel, the sub-prior; and three other canons. They all said that they were satisfied, apart from canon Robert Francis, who complained that the prior was cruel and severe to those he disliked, but lenient to those he favoured.

BLYTHBURGH PRIORY

Dissolution

The priory should have been dissolved in 1528, with its revenues used to set up Cardinal Wolsey's college at Ipswich; however, after his fall from grace, building in Ipswich was halted and the college was shut, and Blythburgh Priory was not dissolved until 1537. At dissolution, the priory was very poor: it was worth only 68 (equivalent to about £120 in modern terms), including five houses and a cart. The prior was given a pension of 6s, but the canons were given nothing.

A turnpike road was built through the village in 1785 and used some of the stone from the old priory.

Nick and Susan Harward, owners of The Priory, found some human bones when they dug up part of their garden, intending to lay a new patio. Channel Four's 'Time Team' did a three-day dig in the area in October 2005, and discovered that the priory was larger than was once thought. Among the finds at the site were a well-preserved skeleton of a man dating from the 13th century, and bones which were radiocarbon-dated to the 10th century – before the Augustinian priory was built, suggesting that there may have been a Saxon church on the site before then.

Blythburgh church and the visit of Black Shuck

Francis Godley printed a pamphlet in London in 1577, entitled 'A Strange and Terrible Wonder, wrought very late in the Parish Church of Blythburgh'. It was based on a written account by Abraham Fleming, the rector of St Francis – who might not ever have actually visited Blythburgh. A reprint of the pamphlet from 1820 also references Stow's account, which was added to Holme's Chronicle.

According to Stow, it all started at the parish church of Blythburgh (i.e. Blythburgh on Sunday 4 August 1577, between 9 and 10 in the morning, while the minister was reading the second lesson. Lightning struck through the wall of the church 'into the ground almost a yard deep' and twenty people who were sitting on that side of the church were flung to the ground. The lightning then went up the wall to the 'vesture' (vestry), broke the door, and then went up the steeple where it tore apart the timber and broke the chimneys. And then it 'fled towards Berghie, a towne six miles off'.

The people who'd been hit by the lightning were still on the floor half an hour later; a man aged 'more than forty years' and a fifteen-year-old boy were killed, and the others were scorched.



Black Shuck, at the weather vane in the market place at Blythburgh. Photograph by author.

Right: The witches' stones, Belle Vue Park, Lowestoft.



Example of a double-page spread.