

Town needs to find market documents

They seek them here, they seek them there – but, like the Scarlet Pimpernel, the deeds to Beccles market are proving elusive.

Now the hunt is on for any documents showing who has the right to the market.

It may sound like a party game, but it is a serious issue, because while the information cannot be found, Beccles Town Council cannot take the running of the market back from Waveney District Council.

Waveney is keen to be rid of the market; the town council is keen to take it on; and similar transfers have already happened in Halesworth and Southwold.

But, at the moment, there is no sign of any deeds to show that Waveney owns the rights, and even less sign of evidence that Beccles owned them until the local government reorganisation of 1973-4.

Meanwhile, the market is struggling,

By SARAH BREALEY

and, having had just four stalls for some time, for the past fortnight the number has dwindled to three. The town council is keen to attract new traders, but its hands are tied.

District and town councillor Jack Walmsley said: "There should be some legal documents that show title and all the rest of it. We have searched high and low for them. It has got lost in the mists of time."

The rights to the market were not registered with the Land Registry, and since the deeds cannot be found, the Land Registry wants other evidence – documents or pictures showing that the market has been run for hundreds of years, and that the town council has been involved in it, at least since the 1830s when it took over from the Fen Company.

Mr Walmsley said: "We have already had indications that several people

would join the market if the town council were running it. It has always been a small market, but we could build it up. How can we call ourselves a market town if we haven't got a market?"

Meanwhile, in Lowestoft, there has been a delay of around two years in changing the bylaws for the town seashore and promenade, all because the original documents, some dating back to the 1880s, cannot be found.

Waveney District Council has had to ask the Department for Communities and Local Government to revoke the original bylaws so it can put new ones in place, but the issue seems to have got bogged down in Whitehall.

■ If you have any documents or photographs about the history or past ownership of Beccles market, contact the EDP at 20 Blyburgate, Beccles NR34 9TB, e-mail sarah.brealey@archant.co.uk, or telephone 01502 712060.



Picture: NICK BUTCHER

BIRD OF PREY: Willow the harris hawk – with handler Nick Robertson – is flying over the Jeld-Wen factory site in Lowestoft to scare away the seagulls that have been causing problems for the workforce and visitors.

Factory brings in hawk to scare off seagulls

Seagulls happily nesting in a Lowestoft factory roof are in for a nasty shock after annoying their unwilling hosts.

With complaints stacking up from staff and visitors at the Jeld-Wen factory on Waveney Drive, managers have enlisted the help of a harris hawk to ruffle the feathers of their unwelcome guests.

The predator, named Willow, will be employed to reclaim the skies above the window and door manufacturer's building for as long as a year to make sure the gulls don't return.

Bird-lovers were reassured that

the hawk would mimic hunting patterns to scare away the gulls, but was trained not to attack or kill them.

General manager Tom Horne said: "We are very concerned about the damage, noise and general nuisance that these gulls make and we have been looking at the best way to reduce bird numbers humanely without actually harming them."

"Bringing in a bird of prey is meant to be one of the best ways to discourage the gulls from returning here and we can't wait to see the results."

The times and days of Willow's

patrol patterns will be varied so her victims do not become familiar with the routine. And if a predator circling overhead is not enough of a deterrent, the company also plans to tether a European eagle owl to the roof during the nesting season to ensure the gulls think twice about bringing up their chicks on the factory roof.

"The sight of such a large bird of prey should help discourage gulls from returning to a location as they will realise that it is not a safe place to live and will begin to disappear in large numbers," said Mr Horne.

Craft fair to raise funds for church roof

A craft fair and art exhibition is taking place at a Norfolk village at the weekend for the first in a series of events to help fund repairs to a historic church.

The 600-year-old St Mary's Church in Feltwell, near Brandon, is in need of about £200,000 to replace its crumbling roof.

The Friends of St Mary's Church group, which was formed earlier in the

year after a large piece of timber fell to the floor narrowly missing a bride, groom and minister, is holding its first fundraising event on Sunday.

Chairman Terrace Shapland said applications to English Heritage and other historic buildings organisations had been made, but the friends hoped to generate at least £5,000 by 2008.

The grade I-listed building is the only

church in the UK with nine stained glass windows, which include a special red glass made in France and found only in cathedrals in Europe.

The craft fair and art exhibition, which will see the launch of a St Mary's tea towel and village eco-shopping bag, will take place between 10am and 4pm at Porter's Barn, Old Methwold Road, Feltwell.

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