

Thorpe History Group - Newsletter Spring 2014

The Thorpe History Group has put on two talks so far, both well attended. This newsletter contains a report on the most recent one by Steve Cherry on the Thorpe Asylum along with details of our programme for the rest of 2014 and updates on our other activities.

We have been offered material on the history of Thorpe and have used some in this edition. We would welcome more, particularly photographs of buildings that no longer exist and of people who have played a part in the areas' history.

Our next event will be a talk entitled

'The Harveys of Thorpe'

by Patricia Wagstaff.

Friday 11th April

**at the St Andrew's Centre on Thunder Lane,
beginning at 7.30.**

There will be a charge of £3 per person.

We can only accommodate a limited number at the hall so please arrive in plenty of time.



Thorpe Lodge, the offices of Broadland Council, built by John Harvey as his family home.

Our Last Talk: The Asylum Revisited

A packed hall at St Andrew's Centre welcomed Steve Cherry, a lecturer in Modern British History at UEA, to give a talk on the Norfolk Lunatic Asylum. Steve has research interests in social history, particularly the history of health and medicine. He had talked to people who had worked at Thorpe Hospital to learn about its history and has a wide range of photographs of the buildings, wards, nursing staff and doctors of the 19th century.

Only the second of its kind to be built in Britain the Thorpe Asylum was commissioned by the county magistrates and opened for patients in April 1814. It was a very open, moral building and although the rooms described as cells which were used for welcoming the patients and assessing their needs, were at the back of the building away from the road, if their health improved they spent their last days at the hospital in rooms overlooking the turnpike road which would be their way back to life in the wider society.

Some of the patients were there solely because they were poor but there were also sick people in workhouses who should have been in the asylum. There were no regulations for the care of lunatics at the start of the 19th century and so the asylum provided accommodation rather than treatment. By 1840 there was more medical input and William Hill, a doctor who was paid 400 guineas a year, started working at the Hospital in 1861, replacing Ebenezer Owens, male nurse, who had been paid 100 guineas a year.

The asylum was self sufficient, running a farm, a laundry and bakery. Many patients worked during the day helping to run the services and some made shoes. This approach proved to be therapeutic and some did not want to leave when their health improved. Those who did not have a trade went to Hellesdon Hospital.

In 1903 the North side was built and nurses' training improved. During World War 1 St Andrews became the Norfolk War Hospital, accommodating 30,000 casualties. In 1919 the asylum became St Andrew's Hospital although some patients were moved to a new hospital at Little Plumstead.

During World War II, the hospital became very overcrowded as five wards were used for air raid casualties from Norwich and the nursing staff included Red Cross volunteers.

Between 1950 and 1960, there were major improvements in mental health care with new types of medication being used. The new Mental Health Trust was set up in 1994 and after that, St Andrew's Hospital was gradually closed down completely.

In conclusion, the asylum served its purpose but it became too big. On the original south site, the buildings have been renovated and sold as desirable residences.

Pam Harwood

Thorpe People: Charles Fox - head attendant at the Thorpe Hospital

Charles Fox (pictured right in his military uniform) was the Head Attendant at the Thorpe Hospital during the period prior to the First World War. During the war when it was a military hospital he held the rank of Sergeant Major in the Royal Army Medical Corps. Being head attendant was a responsible position - during Fox's time there were 550 women patients on the south side and 450 male patients on the north side. There were about 120 nurses and attendants.

Born in Doncaster Charles moved to Norfolk with his family and worked as a boot finisher in East Dereham where his father was a tailor, before taking up a post as an attendant at the Thorpe Asylum in the 1880s. He was also a gifted singer, specialising in light opera and also in comic songs under a stage name of the Norfolk Comedian.



After the war he was the licensee of the Griffin public house where he was succeeded by his son Cecil.

Sadly, Charles lost a son during the First World War.

Frederick (pictured left in middle) was killed in France in August 1916 aged only 18 when serving with the Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment. He is commemorated on the river green war memorial on the.

If anyone has information or photos of others commemorated on the memorial, John Balls would love to hear from you. You can

contact John on 01603 433712 or email johnb1912@btinternet.com

We are grateful to Mrs Gardiner for providing the information for this article and allowing us to use the photographs.

Conundrum

Can anybody tell us when the photograph below was taken? It appears to have been taken during the 1920s or 30s and shows a well attended event on the river watched by a large crowd. It comes from a post card produced by Mr and Mrs Swain who were well known Norwich photographers. Thorpe has a long history of water frolics and regattas so it would be good to establish when this particular event took place. If you can help please contact Nick Williams.



Are you interested in the Titanic?

John Balls of the Thorpe History Group is giving a talk on 'Norfolk Survivors of the Titanic' on April 29th at the St William's Way Library at 6.30 p.m.

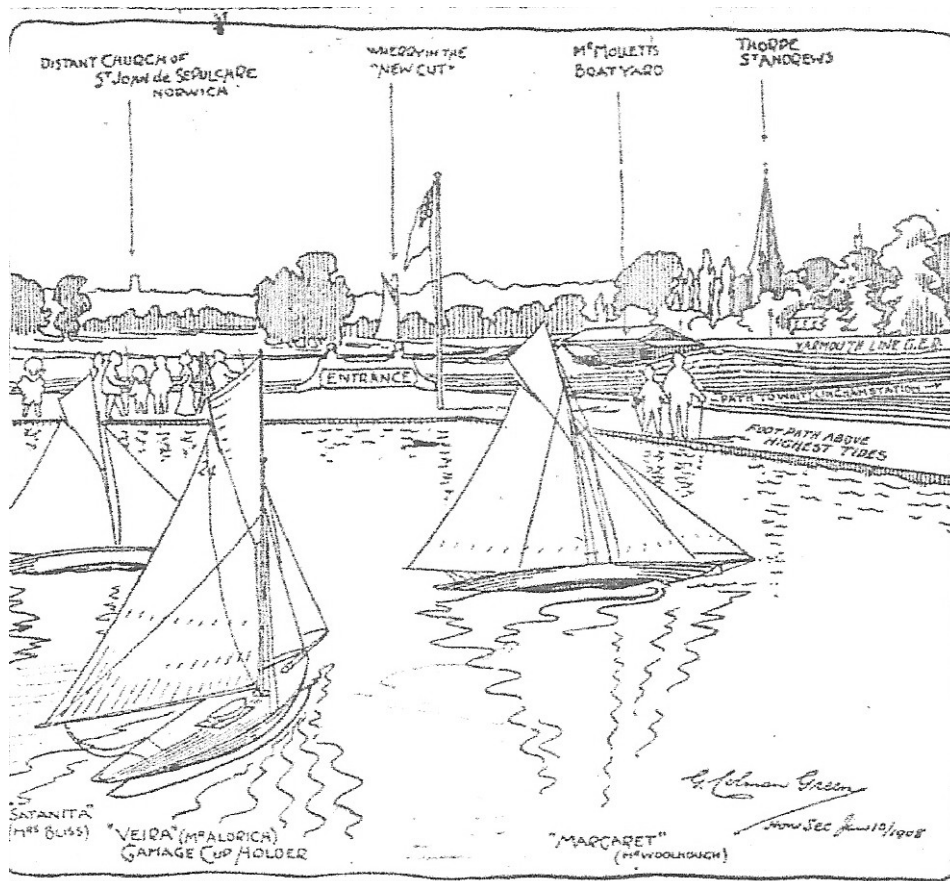
Admission is free but as space is limited booking is essential.

You can book by phoning the library on 01603 434123

Memorial Recording

Would you be interested in being part of a group to record the inscriptions in the Thorpe Cemetery? Much has already been done but the central part still needs recording. It would take some time and would be started once the grass and brambles have been cut back to give access. If you are interested please contact Nick Williams.

The Thorpe Yacht Pond



The sketch above shows a yacht pond that was proposed in 1908 by the Norfolk and Norwich Model Yacht club. It appears to be on the marshes south of the railway line near Whittingham station - the parish church can be seen to the right behind what is marked as the 'Yarmouth Line GER'. The pond does not seem to have been built. Although there were meetings on the site to lay it out the proposal appears to have come to nothing and the club eventually took up an offer from the Norwich City Council to use the boating lake at Eaton Park.

The Norfolk and Norwich Model Yacht Club was a successful club. In 1907 it had 61 members, rising to 95 the year after. Its President was Russell Colman and there were several Thorpe men on the committee. During early 1900s it was based at the Thorpe Gardens public house and held regattas on the river at Thorpe Reach and what was described as Thorpe Broad. But the river was not a satisfactory venue for some classes of model boats so the search for a boating pond began. The club was still going strong in 1928, and still using the Eaton Park boating lake.

We are very grateful to Mr Freeman for the information about the pond and for the illustration.

Putting the group on a formal basis

The numbers of people who have attended our initial meeting and the two talks held so far have shown there is a lot of interest in a Thorpe History Group. The Steering Group has decided that we should have a more formal arrangement so people know who is doing what. Accordingly we have agreed a constitution for the Thorpe History Group and have elected an interim committee to run the Group. John Balls is Chairman, Joanna Barker is Treasurer and Nick Williams is Secretary. The other members of the Committee are Pam Harwood, Phyll Hardie and Malcolm Martins. We have also opened a bank account so income and expenditure can be accounted for.

There will be an Annual General Meeting in the autumn to review the arrangements, decide whether to have an annual subscription and hold elections for the committee. This will be an opportunity for people to let us know what they think about the organisation of the group and propose any changes.

The arrangements for the AGM will be advertised in a future newsletter. If you want a copy of the constitution or wish to know more please contact Nick Williams.

Events in 2014

Date	Title	Venue	Time
Friday 11th April	'The Harvey family of Thorpe' a talk by Patricia Wagstaffe	St Andrew's Centre	7.30 pm
Sunday 22nd June	Stall at Armed Forces Day	Recreation Ground	2.00 pm (to be confirmed).
Friday 18th July	History tour of the Rosary cemetery by Nick Williams	This is now full	7.30 pm
Sunday 10th August	History tour of the Rosary cemetery by Nick Williams	Please book by contacting Nick	2.00 pm
September	Heritage Open Day event: to be confirmed		
Friday 7th November	Thorpe in World War 1, a talk by John Balls	St Andrew's Centre	7.30 pm

Numbers are restricted for the tour of the Rosary so booking is essential, although we may be able to organise a further tour if necessary. Contact Nick Williams to book.

Getting in contact

If you have any comments about the newsletter, want to know more about the Thorpe History Group or have something interesting on the history of Thorpe you would like to share please contact Nick Williams on 01603 438766 or email him at Spinney72@aol.com