

Thorpe History Group - Newsletter Winter 2014

This is the second newsletter of the Thorpe History Group which will be produced three times a year to report on our activities and provide a programme of future events. We also hope to feature items of interest about the history of Thorpe - contributions would be welcome.

Our next event will be a talk titled

'Revisiting the Asylum'

on St Andrew's Hospital
by Steve Cherry, an expert on the subject.

**It will take place on Friday 7th February
at the St Andrew's Centre on Thunder Lane,
beginning at 7.30.**

There will be a charge of £3 per person.



Pictured above: a view of the entrance to the former Asylum when in use as a military hospital during the First World War.

Our Last Talk: The Rosary Cemetery in Thorpe Hamlet

The Thorpe History Group held its first event on the 14th November last year. It was a talk on the history of the Rosary Cemetery given by Nick Williams at the St Andrew's Centre. Nick is Chairman of the Friends of the Rosary and has written two books about the cemetery.

The Rosary was created by Thomas Drummond, a Unitarian Minister, in 1821. It had previously been a market garden and was not consecrated ground so folk who had no religion could be buried there. There was a need for more burial grounds as the City's churchyards such as St John's in Maddermarket and All Saints in Westlegate were far too overcrowded, and there was an increasing death rate due to the unhealthy conditions of city dwellers. Sanitation was poor and cholera was rife in the 1800s.

The first burial was of Thomas's wife and took place on 1st November 1821. The cemetery was not a successful enterprise to start with as, at that time, it was remote, new and unfamiliar and body snatching was rife. However, the passing of the Anatomy Act in 1832 which licensed dissection, and the availability of unclaimed corpses from workhouses and other sources reduced the need for body-snatching. By the middle of the nineteenth century the Rosary had become more popular and many civic leaders were buried there. The Trust employed a superintendent, usually an ex-policeman, to supervise burials and ensure the cemetery was well maintained. He lived in the lodge at the entrance to the cemetery.

Nick talked about several well known people who are buried there such as George Chamberlain, George White, John Barker, Charles Thurston, Isaac Cokes, and John Taylor. There are 30 Commonwealth War graves and also several soldiers who served in the 1840 Afghanistan conflict. Also at the Rosary are two of the victims from the Thorpe St Andrew rail crash of September 1874.

In 1900 the Rosary was full with 10,000 buried there so 8 acres were bought to the North extending to Telegraph Lane East. In 1950, the trustees passed ownership over to Norwich City Council who continue to manage it. The Rosary is still used for burials but is also a haven for wildlife and a place for peaceful recreation in a busy urban area.

After questions, Nick was thanked for his talk and those attending enjoyed refreshments.

Pam Harwood

Thorpe History Group Projects - update

Following the initial meeting several people came forward with projects they were interested in. Since then they have been carrying out research and assembling material and below report on progress:

The Thorpe Train Crash of 1874

I have started research into the dreadful rail disaster which killed 20 people at the time of the accident with 7 others dying from their injuries and many others injured. There were several doctors travelling on the two trains including Dr. Eade travelling on the train from Lowestoft, he only sustained minor injuries to his face and was able to start attending to the injured.

So far I have chatted with two local residents who have 'family connections' with the accident, one whose great-grandfather was injured, but survived. If anyone has family or other connections or information they would like to share with me I would be pleased to hear from them.

Contact Joanna Barker 01603 701587

Thorpe Street names and their origins

Dale Wiseman and Roger Pointer are looking for help in finding out more about the street and road names in Thorpe St Andrew. They intend in time to produce a leaflet providing the stories behind the street names and would welcome any information that may prove helpful. Its not just streets and roads but lokes, lanes and closes too.

What they are interested in is:

- ◆ How did your street get its name?
- ◆ Is there a story behind the name?
- ◆ Do you have information that would help them?

If you can help please contact Roger at roger.pointer@sky.com

War Memorial Project

My research is going well, and a number of interesting points have emerged. The actual publication of the Booklet will depend on the availability of grant funding. I am in the process of applying for relevant support.

One particular name on the Memorial is puzzling, and I should like help to solve this puzzle, Private Benjamin Wicks died in April 1918, and served with the New Brunswick Regiment of the Canadian Infantry. He was the son of Mrs. Agnes Wicks of Hillside Road, but I have no idea how he came to be serving with a Canadian Regiment.

If you can help with information about Benjamin Wicks or other names on the memorial please contact John Balls at 01603 433712 or email him at johnb1912@btinternet.com

The Thorpe Observatory

Recently we received an enquiry about the observatory which stood beside the river. Thanks to Janet Smith we were able to provide some details.

The observatory (pictured below) was at the eastern end of the garden of Town House (now the Town House Hotel), on Yarmouth Road, when it was the home of George James Newbegin during the late nineteenth century. It is unclear how long he lived there but he is listed in Kellys Directory of 1896.

Newbegin was a keen astronomer and a founder member of the British Astronomical Association which was no doubt why he built the observatory. His son Montague was also an active member of the Association.



Picture courtesy of Mr B J Mitchell.

If you have any information on the Observatory or on George Newbegin please get in contact (see back page).

The chimney at the Thorpe Hospital

As our next talk is on the former Thorpe mental hospital it seemed an opportune time to include an article on the chimney which was so prominent a feature of the site for three quarters of a century. It has been provided by Neil Evans whose grandfather helped build it in 1902.

'The building firm's name is unknown, possibly John Youngs, who was then the most prominent building contractor in the area. My late grandfather Ethelbert Spanton Evans of South Walsham (for some reason always addressed as Bert) became a bricklayer following naval service in the 1870s and 1880s. He worked on the Royal Hotel (for Youngs) and later on a terrace of red brick cottages, now demolished, for hospital staff at Thorpe about 100 yards from the chimney.

Back to the chimney. In those days workmen often drank beer whilst working. It was cheap, of good quality, and said to be nourishing. During the erection of the chimney, one of the labourers would fetch a supply of beer from the nearby public house The Griffin Inn. It would usually be in a large stoneware liquid receptacle, light brown in colour with a glazed exterior.

My grandfather witnessed one incident when the foreman stopped the labourer carrying beer for the men from climbing the ladder beside the chimney shaft. He thought the man was too drunk and would probably have fallen to his death if he lost his grip on the ladder. The labourer, not to be thwarted, waited until the foreman's back was turned, then went to the back of the chimney and climbed up the scaffolding (it would have been wooden poles) without use of a ladder. He accomplished this extremely hazardous chore without mishap. The men were very gratified to receive their refreshment under such unusual circumstances. There is no record of the foreman's reaction.

Just before the completion of the chimney a sudden furious squall of wind developed. The bricklayers got down via the ladder just in time before the strongest wind struck. My grandfather was too late for the ladder so clung to the scaffold pole nearest to him, which prevented him being thrown from the scaffolding. After the storm passed, the chimney was undamaged but the scaffolding had shifted. Instead of equal numbers of scaffold deals (planks) on one side there were only two where there had been six. None of the workmen would ascend the ladder afterwards so my grandfather completed the chimney on his own! The fact that during his naval service he often had to climb the masts and tend the to the sails (often in stormy conditions) gave him valuable experience of the situation he encountered whilst working on the chimney.'

The chimney was demolished in April 1978 after the hospital changed to oil and gas heating. The 119 foot high chimney was demolished brick by brick and took about four weeks.

Can you help?

Some members of Norwich U3A have produced a book, 'Aspects of Greater Norwich', containing reports of various individual studies. My contribution, on Decorative Norwich, looks at different sources of inspiration for craftwork, particularly of the textile form. We have now been asked to produce a follow-up, for which I would like to be able to photograph finished work inspired by some of the designs found.

The Rosary Cemetery in Thorpe Hamlet has many such designs, in the form of Victorian celtic crosses and ironwork. I have produced patterns of some of these, ready to be used according to the individual craftworker's interpretation, in embroidery, patchwork, quilting, applique, printing, etc, perhaps even in wood or metal. Do we have any craftworkers among us willing to have a go? If so, please get in touch. All I ask is that I be allowed to photograph the finished pieces for our forthcoming book.

Phyll Hardie Tel: 01603 435547 phyl@hardie24.plus.com

Events in 2014

Date	Title	Venue	Time
Friday 7th February 2014	'Revisiting the Asylum' - by Steve Cherry	St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane	7.30 pm
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	Numbers restricted -see below	7.30 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