

THORPE HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter - Spring 2015

Our next talk

'A Tour of Thorpe'

Nick Williams.

Friday 17th April - 7.30pm at the St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane,
There will be a charge of £3 per person.

Janet Smith 1932-2015

Many people will have known Janet who died on 22nd February at her home on Stanmore Road. For 14 years from 1984 she was the driving force behind the first Thorpe History Group, organising talks, walks and excursions. But she did much much more than that - she had an immense knowledge of Thorpe and all aspects of its history which she enthused others with.

Her parents were originally from Bradford but Janet lived in Stanmore Road for over 75 years, first at the family home and then later in a bungalow with a south facing garden that was one of her other great loves.

Aged 18 Janet attended Leeds Technical College where she trained to be a librarian before returning to Norwich to work in the former Thorpe Road library. Later she was appointed as the first librarian at the new St Williams Way library before moving to Wymondham where she spent 20 years. during her time at Wymondham she was responsible for starting the town archive, was a town guide and active in the Wymondham Heritage Society.



Janet was also a popular speaker on a number of topics. She was also heavily involved in Dragon Hall in King Street and an active walker. She will be much missed for her knowledge, her enthusiasm and her huge generosity of spirit in her encouragement of others.

Our Last Talk: The Churches of Thorpe

It was a cold early February evening but this didn't stop nearly 60 local history enthusiasts attending the talk on the history of the Churches of Thorpe by Nick Groves.

In 1852, Thorpe Hamlet and Thorpe St Andrew and part of what is now Heartsease were all one parish of Thorpe. The first church existed on land just north of the current Hillside Avenue allotments but there is no trace of it now and it was not listed in the Domesday book so was not large enough to have to pay taxes to the crown.

In the 15th century the second church was built near the river Yare where there was a significant settlement. It was still the smallest in the diocese measuring just 25 yards East-West and 7 yards North-South. A tower was added later which had 2 bells. One is now to be found in the Thorpe St Andrew cemetery chapel. The rood screen from this is missing. Thomas Vere (d. 1766) who was a local MP and JP gave £350 to the rector to build a school and add a new altar.

In 1864 the second church was replaced with a bigger building which could hold 450 parishioners. This was funded by William Birkbeck (d. 1897). It was designed by Jeckyll whose father was a vicar in Wymondham. He also designed Great Hautbois church and Holt Methodist church.

Birkbeck also gave £1,000 towards a new Church tower. Pearce, who was also responsible for Great Yarmouth Town Hall, was the architect and it is in the Victorian Gothic style. The Church bells were only rung once in December 1886 by Mancroft ringers for 6 hours. The tower was not stable and although 3 tie rods were inserted the bells have never been rung since. The spire was damaged during a second world war bomb blast. The west window was replaced in 1969. Interestingly, the 1920 rood screen depicts local worthies dressed as saints.

As Thorpe Hamlet developed and had a larger population than upper Thorpe, it had its own church built near the river at St Matthew's Road. Norfolk railways subscribed to its upkeep. The rector was appointed by the rector of Thorpe St Andrew. Pew rents existed there until 1918 to support the rector's income. It has now been converted into offices.

In 1906, a wooden church was built at the top of Kett's Hill called St Leonard's after the patron saint of prisoners. However, 1981 this was pulled down and a new church built in Telegraph Lane. This new church has the font and cross from the spire of the old St Leonard's Church.

St Francis Church on Rider Haggard Road, Heartsease, was built in 1957 and JP Chaplin was the architect. It has the bell from St Ethelreda's in Norwich. It displays a sculpture by Mike Toll from Heartsease School.

Malcolm Martins gave a vote of thanks to Dr Groves for his interesting talk.

Pam Harwood

Thorpe People: Stanley Waterson

Memories of the Home Guard and service in East Africa

Thorpe man Stanley Waterson, known to everybody as 'Billy' joined the Local Defence Volunteers in Thorpe in 1941 when he was only 18. The Volunteers had been formed in May 1940, when with Britain under the threat of a German invasion a request for men aged between 18 and 65 who were not in the armed services to come forward and assist in the defence of the country was made. It produced 250,000 volunteers within a few days. Later, at the insistence of Winston Churchill, it was renamed the Home Guard as he felt that the name Local Defence Volunteers was uninspiring at a time of national emergency.

Stanley joined in 1941 at Britannia Barracks in Norwich, was kitted out with a uniform, and became part of a unit of 20 to 30 men. The unit was commanded by Captain Scarles, a builder from Queens Road, who had military experience, having fought in the previous war. He was succeeded as Sergeant by Bert Gibson, who owned the garage next to The Redan public house on Thorpe Road. Training took place at the barracks - usually on a Sunday morning. On one occasion the unit was offered the opportunity to do something out of the ordinary when they were each given the chance to drive a Bren-gun carrier around the parade ground. This was no easy thing to do as the tracks were controlled by levers which took some getting used to. The headquarters of the Thorpe Home Guard was The Buck on river green where Sunday parades were held in the car park after training, followed by a swift half! Other members of the unit included Gilbert Moss and Basil Todd.

The duties of the Thorpe unit included patrolling the river, looking for German parachutists or anything suspicious. This was an all night vigil, setting off in the evening from the river green in a cruiser loaned by Hearts Cruisers and patrolling the river Yare from Thorpe to Surlingham. The unit also had to keep watch over the Thorpe marshes from the tower at Pinebanks which provided an excellent viewing position at the top of the hill. This was a two man duty, but with only one rifle and six rounds of ammunition between them. It could be boring but there were moments of excitement - one evening Billy's patrol fired at a German plane flying low over the marshes, but without any obvious success.

Billy was not a Thorpe man by birth, his family lived at Carrow Hill until they were bombed out in 1940. His father was a fireman at the nearby Carrow works and did fire duty from the tower on Carrow Hill. Billy later moved to Thorpe where he lived at Green Lane before moving to a newly built bungalow on Prior Road in 1957 when he got married. He still lives in Prior Road, although in a different house to the one he first moved into.

Following his stint in the Local Defence Volunteers Billy joined the Army at the end of 1942 and served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. His war service took him to east Africa where he saw service in Somaliland and Ethiopia before being demobilised in 1947. His trip home involved a flight in a

Lancaster bomber from Somaliland to Aden and then a voyage in the troopship Georgic which was bringing thousands of troops home from India.

In peacetime Billy worked for the Eastern Counties Bus Company at their engineering workshop in Cremorne Lane for 48 years before retiring.

Billy is pictured during his time in East Africa.

Thorpe History Group is very grateful to Billy for permitting us to record his memories and use the picture of him from his military service.



Archive Day -Saturday 18th July

On Saturday 18th July at the Morse Pavilion on Laundry Lane the Thorpe History Group is holding an Archive Day when items from the History Archive held by the Thorpe St Andrew Town Council will be on show.

But it will also be an opportunity for you to bring along your mementos of Thorpe for us to see. We are particularly interested in seeing photographs of Thorpe as it was and of Thorpe residents.

The Archive Day starts at 2pm and finishes at 4pm. We look forward to seeing you there.

Thorpe Hospitals in World War One

Following his talk on Thorpe in World War I John Balls has written this article on the military hospitals that were established in Thorpe during the war.

For the last few months I have been working with a team which has been cataloguing material from the Medical Records of the Norfolk Regiment in World War One. This research has included the recording of hospitals in this country and abroad to which wounded men were admitted. Nine hospitals in Norfolk are included, and one of these is the Norfolk War Hospital in Thorpe, which played a major part in looking after the war wounded. The decision was taken in 1915 to turn the Mental Asylum into a clearing centre, treating the wounded who arrived at Thorpe Station, and then discharging them to hospitals around the County, but it soon expanded into a complete hospital, eventually with 2,450 beds when an annexe and tents were added.



The medical superintendent at the Asylum, Dr. David Thompson, became a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and he had a dedicated and hard-working group of surgeons, doctors and nurses with him. 8,657 surgical procedures were carried out, 3,000 involving the removal of bullets or shell shrapnel. 419 patients died in the Hospital, including two who are included in my book on the War Memorial, Sergeant Joseph Amos and Lieutenant Claude Kysh. By 1917 there were 320 nurses at the hospital, 39 ward sisters, 77 staff nurses, and many probationers. The hospital (pictured above) ceased to function as such in 1919, and in 1920 Earl Hague unveiled a plaque in the entrance hall which recorded that 45,000 military patients were treated in the Hospital between 1915 and 1919.

We know much less about the two smaller hospitals in Thorpe, but they show how even comparatively small war efforts were vital. One was in, Coonor, a house just off Yarmouth Road which still stands but with a different name. The owner was Major William Sandars Dods, Colonel of the Norfolk Regiment, hence the name Coonor. He lived there with his wife, Eunice, and the couple tragically lost their son in action just after the War started, in October 1914. William was only 22, and was a Lieutenant in the Leicestershire Regiment. His name is on the Ploegstert Memorial in Hainault, Belgium, which our Thorpe party visiting the Battlefields will see at the end of May. In his memory his parents gave permission for their house to be used as an auxiliary hospital, with the Rector's wife, Maud supple as commandant, assisted by nurses and voluntary helpers. Several hundred soldiers were treated at Coonor before it closed in 1919.



The rather contrived photograph above shows patients and nurses at Coonor during its use as a military hospital.

The third Thorpe Hospital was Sunny Hill(sometimes known as Sunnyhill). This was a large house at the back of Thorpe Lodge, near Harvey Lane. In 1914 Sunny Hill was the home of William Clabburn, the well-known Norwich silk shawl manufacturer. There are very few details about its use as a hospital, but we do know that the house became number 7, Yarmouth Road, and in 1949 was bought by Langley School.

The Merseyside-at-War collection includes an Autograph Book kept by Ethel Smith who was a nurse at Sunny Hill between 1915 and 1916. It contains entries by many of the soldiers she would have nursed and treated.

If any one has extra information about this and the other hospitals, I should be pleased to hear it.

John Balls.

Thorpe Visit to the World War 1 Battlefields.

Spaces still available

There are still spaces available on the trip to the World War 1 battlefields being organised by John Balls from Tuesday 26th to Saturday 30th May this year.

Travel will be with Leger Holidays executive coach from Thorpe, via the Channel Tunnel to Ypres. Bed and breakfast accommodation will be provided there in at least a 3 star hotel from where visits to all the main sites and cemeteries, including those associated with some of the Thorpe war dead will take place.

Our guide will be Martin Ruddock, who has led many tours to this area.

The cost is £329 per person sharing a twin/double room, with a single room supplement of £99.

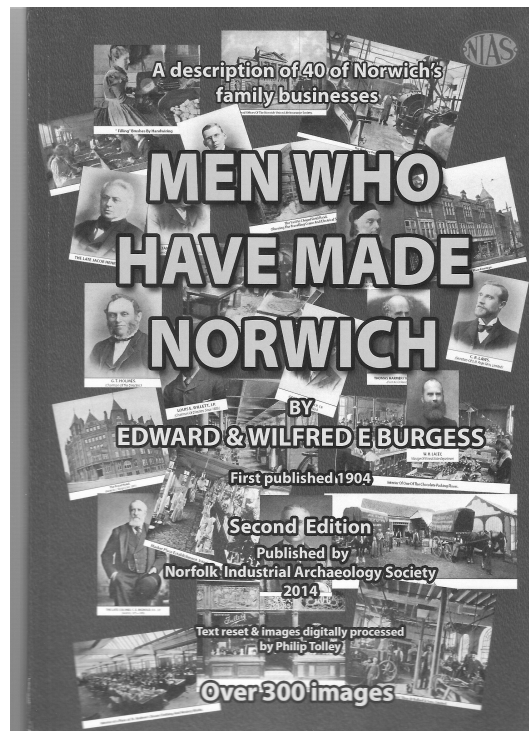
If you are interested please contact John Balls at 01603 433712 or by email at johnb1912@btinternet.com

Review

Men Who Have Made Norwich

A reprint of a book first published in 1904 *Men Who Have Made Norwich* tells the story of 40 of Norwich's major companies and the men behind their success. It includes many of the brewers, shoemakers and engineering firms plus those long forgotten such as Adcock's tobacco factory and the Norwich Steam Laundry. There are links with Thorpe St Andrew which was home to some the successful businessmen featured such as Alfred Haldinstein, Henry Patteson and Ernest Curl.

Published by the Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society this lavishly illustrated book is normally priced at £18.99 but is available to Thorpe History Group members at £15 from Bev Woolner 01603 408594 or email at bevthebinder@gmail.com.



Future Events

Date	Title	Venue	Time
Sunday 26th April	We will have a stall at the St Georges Day event	Fitzmaurice Pavilion	12am-4pm
Saturday 18th July	Archive day - see details on previous page.	Morse Pavilion	2pm
Sunday 26th July	History tour of the Rosary cemetery by Nick Williams	Rosary - meet at chapel	2pm
September	Heritage Open Day event	To be confirmed	
Friday 13th November	'Thorpe Hamlet Miscellany' by June and Jim Marriage	St Andrew's Centre	7.30pm

Getting in contact

If 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