

THORPE HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter - Spring 2017

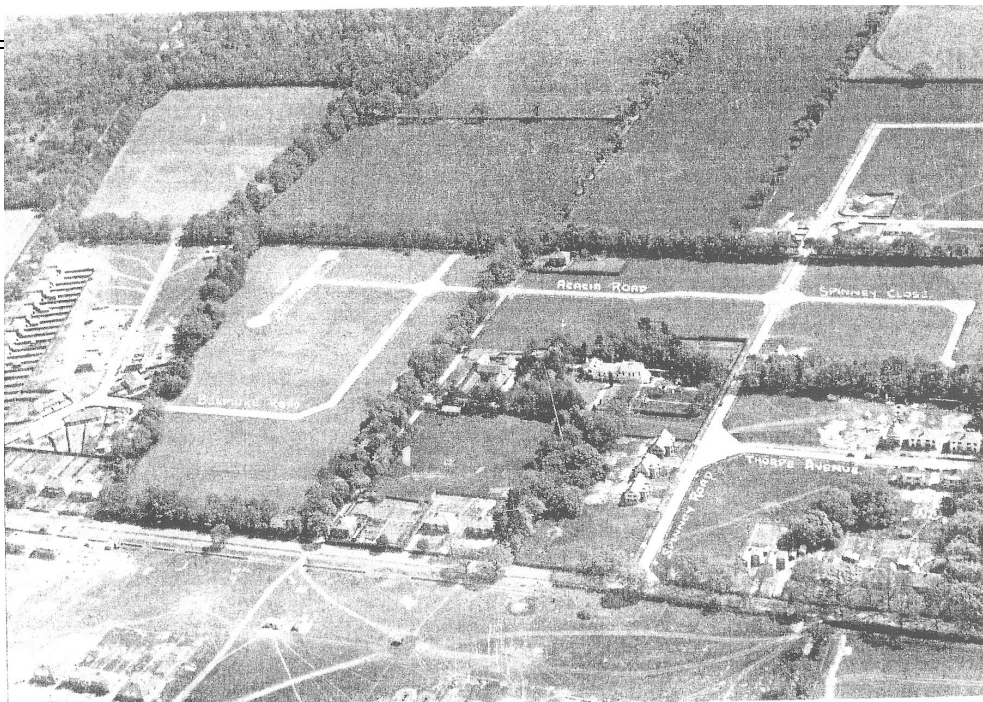
Our next talk
A Time to Build
(the development of Thorpe from the
1920s)

Thursday 12th October - 8pm
at the St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane

There will be a charge of £3 per person.

Recent Events

Since the last newsletter we have put on two well attended talks, one on the history of Pinebanks and the other on the Thorpe Railway Crash of 1874. There is a full programme of events for the next few months: details on the last page. Below is an aerial photograph of the Spinney Road area before it was developed. The Cottage public house is in the middle foreground.



Our February Talk - 'Pinebanks'

In February Dale introduced local historian and Chair of the Thorpe History Group, John Balls who gave a talk on Pinebanks to a packed house, probably due to the fact that many Thorpe residents, having worked for Norwich Union in the past, have used the facilities offered there, have fond memories and are interested in its history.

John began by thanking all those who had helped with the research for his talk, some of whom were in the audience. He had had personal experience of visiting Pinebanks (pictured below some years ago) at several garden parties as his wife worked there.



It was built in 1880 by Norwich solicitor John Odin Howard Taylor. Taylor's folly (which is referred to as Conning's Tower in the sales brochure of 1918) was built in 1880. The architect is unknown. There is an inscription on the tower:-

'OMNE TULIT PUNCTUM QUI MISCUIT UTILE DULCI

(from 'Ars Poetica' – 'HORACE') 'He has gained every point who has combined the useful and the agreeable'.

The coastline from Cromer to Gt Yarmouth can be seen from the top of the tower. The staircase was very narrow as John Taylor was a keen chess player and, as his wife was rather portly, the narrow stair ensured his peace and quiet.

The tower was used for a charity chess match which the Queen of Hawaii attended in 1887 while visiting the UK to celebrate Queen Victoria's diamond Jubilee. There is a stone shield commemorating the occasion.

From 1904 – 1908 Edward John Caley of the Caley Chocolate & Mineral Water family lived there. It was sold in 1918 to Herbert Jarrold at auction on 26th November 1918, the sales brochure is in the Janet Smith archive. Particulars included a handsomely carved mahogany and oak George I

staircase removed from Surrey House, Norwich. They also included 9 bedrooms, 6 of which were in the Turret part of the house. The grounds included a well-timbered ravine (used as a miniature rifle range) and woodlands as well as the Conning Tower, referred to earlier.

During the war, the tower was taken over by the Army, the reason for which was kept secret from those working in the house. In fact the gardener had to sign the official secrets act. It was discovered subsequently that a bunker had been dug under the tennis courts for some secret purpose. It is now protected as a scheduled monument.

In 1921, the Norwich Union Athletic Association bought the School Lane grounds and in 1953 the house was purchased. By 1954 there were several sports clubs using the grounds, including table tennis and bowling. Only signed up members could use the bar.

In 1960 a new hall was built to accommodate the increasing numbers of Norwich Union employees using the club. Some of the original stained glass windows were incorporated in this. From 1963, clubs included a cricket club and Norfolk County Cricket Club used the pitch for matches on a number of occasions. A chess tournament held in 1972 attracted 130 players.

When Norwich Union was taken over by Aviva, the building was used for a time to accommodate the increasing numbers of staff and it was no longer used as a social club. In 2008, it was put up for sale and 30 sports societies had to look elsewhere for premises.

A Jersey based property company bought the property in 2008 and sought planning permission for 135 dwellings in 2013. This was refused by Broadland District Council. But in June that year an alternative plan was approved for 231 houses with the agreement that 3.5 million would be invested in the local community such as for new sports facilities at local schools.

Sadly much of Pinebanks was destroyed when a fire broke out at 1am on 17th July 2014. Despite the efforts of 60 fire fighters much of the magnificent house was lost. More recently developers have bought the Langley School which gives them an additional access road to the Pinebanks site.

The talk finished on a sombre note as John had walked through the site recently and reported that it is now in a very sad derelict state of repair.

Can you help

The pieces of decorative stonework below were found by a resident of St Andrews Avenue in his garden and he asked if the Group could help with identifying what they were or where they came from.

At the moment we don't have any idea. We wondered whether they came from the site of the old church at the top of the Hillside allotments or from an earlier house on St Andrew's Avenue. If you have any suggestions please contact us.



Chapel Lane

During 2016 I led two groups on a walk up Chapel Lane. In preparation for the walks, from the census returns, I became fascinated with some of the residents who lived in the lane, especially between 1850 -1920. It is such a pity that within the Parish of Thorpe–Next- Norwich (as it called during this period) it was not until the census of 1911 that properties were numbered (large properties were named) and therefore one cannot identify who lived in which house and indeed even in the 1911 census some residents of the lane when completing their return did not include their house number!

Many of you will have read our Chairman's book 'Lest We Forget' and are aware of the very sad loss sustained during WW1 by both the Hart family who lived at No. 3 'Yew Cottage' and the Sabberton family who lived first in a house in 'Rotten Row' at the top of the lane and later at No.7, so I have chosen not to write about these two well known local families in this short article.



The Chissell family are listed in the 1881 census as living in the lane with 5 children, the youngest being a little girl aged 4 months (who sadly died aged 4 in 1885) and the oldest a son aged 7 who had been born in Ormesby. George Sandler Chissell was the GER Station Master at Whitlingham Junction (as noted in Kelly's Directory for Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk 1883) . By the 1891 census they are not on the return for the lane as by that time they were living in the newly built Stations Masters house , the building at the junction of Whitlingham Lane and Yarmouth Road. George was born in Mistley Essex in 1850, the son of a Master Mariner. By the time of his marriage to Mary Ann Suzanne Lindford in March 1873 at St Nicholas Parish Church Great Yarmouth he was living with his family in North Quay Great Yarmouth . Mary was born in Martham in 1852 and her father was a Relieving Officer in Great Yarmouth at the time of her marriage to George.

The family went on to have a total of 8 children. Their son Frank was born in December 1882, baptised in July 1883 and died aged 4 in 1887. On a more

cheerful note Parish records show another son Herbert Lindford Chissell born January 1889 and baptised in the March. The family were obviously active within the parish with the children and their mother mentioned in various editions of the Parish Magazine of 1889. Mary provided nuts for scrambles with the boys taking part in these scrambles. Records show that George was still Station Master in 1900 and died aged 56 in December 1906. Mary was living in Thorpe when she died in 1936.

Abraham Moll and his second (or third) wife Jane are listed on the census returns for 1851, 1861 and 1871. The 1851 census shows a married daughter of Abraham living with them, along with his grandson aged 1. Abraham is mentioned in White's 1854 Norfolk as an important bricklayer/builder living in Thorpe-Next-Norwich. He was born in Blofield and died aged 80 in Thorpe and was buried on 2nd June 1877. On what was originally the boundary wall to the south of Swiss Cottage (no. 15) there was a stone in the wall inscribed 'A Moll 1852' (Pictured above). A few years ago the owner of no. 9 moved the stone and it can now be seen on the other side of the wall. I cannot be certain, but assume that Abraham built my house!

However, I do know that George Mollett, a noted Norfolk boat builder, and his wife Elizabeth Lucy Mollett bought Swiss Cottage in 1898 (in fact the house was in her name). Their names appear on the 1901 census showing George aged 43 as an employer and Lucy aged 47. She had been born in Rotherhithe, Surrey in 1855 and is shown as retired, unfortunately the rest of the entry is blurred. On the date of the census return they had a married female visitor aged 56 staying with them, also born in Rotherhithe and I think the entry reads of 'independent means'. George was born in Norwich in 1858 and a census return for 1881 shows George living in Prospect Row Norwich with his mother, a widow and dressmaker, two younger sisters also dressmakers and brother William 18 a boat builder.

By 1891 George was living in Brundall and had a boatyard at the bottom of Staithe Lane. In 'The Land of the Broads' by Ernest R. Suffling he notes that G Mollett Brundall 'builder of all kinds of sailing and rowing boats. Boats housed, 3 ton centre-board Una-rigged cabin boat to sleep 4 persons, for hire. Yachts built'. In 1892 he built 'The Castanet' a double hulled boat drawing less than a foot of water for R. J. Coleman. It had a broad stern and small keel and was the most advanced type of racing boat of her class. He rebuilt the Hope 2 – a 24 ton wherry. These are just a few examples of his craftsmanship.

The 1911 census return was completed by George the only occupant of the house on the return date with his wife staying in Rotherhithe. His occupation was now shown as collector for the River Yare Commissioners. George died in 1916 and Elizabeth sold the house in 1919 and moved into Norwich. A photographer by the name of Thomas Stannard aged 24, born locally and his wife Mary Ann Stannard aged 25, born in Sydney Australia were living in the lane at the time of the 1881 census. I can find nothing more about them. Perhaps someone who reads this article has some knowledge of them or indeed any of the other families I have written about.

Joanna Barker

Future Events

Date	Title	Venue	Time
Sunday 11th June	Chapel Lane Walk by Joanna Barker	Chapel Lane	2pm
Saturday 15th July	Archive Day - a chance to view items from the Janet Smith Archive	St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane	2-4pm
Sunday 23rd July	Tour of Rosary cemetery	Rosary Cemetery, Rosary Road	2pm
Sunday 6th August	Chapel Lane Walk by Joanna Barker	Chapel Lane	2pm
Thursday 7th and Friday 8th September	Heritage Open Day event	Thorpe Lodge	2pm
Sunday 24th September	Walk along Yarmouth Road	Meet at Broadland Council offices	2pm
Thursday 12th October	Talk 'A Time to Build' (The development of Thorpe since 1920) Dale Wiseman and Malcolm Martin	St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane	8pm

Please note that the number of people we can accommodate on the Chapel Lane Walks, the Tour of the Rosary, and the Walk along Yarmouth Road is limited so booking in advance is necessary. You can book by contacting Nick Williams.

Getting in contact

If you 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

The Thorpe History Group is also on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1613500998930684/> or Google Thorpe History Group on Facebook to find some interesting information and photographs.

We now have a website at <http://www.thorpe-history-group.org/> so do take a look.