

THORPE HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter - Autumn 2017

Our next talk
A Time to Build
(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

Please note: the talk will be preceded by the Annual General Meeting where officers will be up for election and the accounts will be presented.

Summer activities

Compared to last year this summer has been less active. The archive day in July went well (pictured below) with interest in the Thorpe films and the scrapbooks and Joanna Barker did two well attended walks up Chapel Lane but due to the unavailability of a suitable vessel we were unable to put on the river trips which was a pity.

This edition is larger than normal as it includes an excellent analysis of women's occupations listed in the 1851 census of Thorpe by Lesley Barrett.



The Thorpe Train Crash of 1874

Our last talk, in April, was on the worst disaster to occur in Thorpe - the train crash of 1874. This is a brief description of what happened.

At 9.31 on the evening of Thursday 10th September 1874 the London Express left Thorpe station, Norwich on its journey to Great Yarmouth. It would pass over the single line linking Thorpe and Brundall.

Rail travel was a relatively new experience and single line working was common and the line between Norwich and Brundall had been managed since 1848 when a new telegraph system had been installed without any problems. Trains leaving either station were issued with an order to proceed and any changes to the timetable were confirmed by the telegraph operators at either end.

However, on this evening things went wrong. The London express was late arriving at Norwich (this was not unusual) so the Yarmouth mail train waiting at Brundall was instructed to come on to Norwich. Inexplicably, due to a misunderstanding between Alfred Cooper the inspector on duty at Norwich and John Robson the 18 year old telegraph clerk, the express was also given authorisation to proceed.

The outcome was catastrophic. In the darkness and pouring rain both trains collided head on just east of the bridge over the river Wensum and within 100 yards of the Thorpe Gardens public house (location pictured below). Local people described the noise as being like a 'thunderclap'. According to an eye witness *'The engines reared up into an almost perpendicular position, and the carriages mounted one upon the top of another, and gradually sunk down into an altogether inconceivable mass of rubbish and ruins. Carriages were piled one on top of the other; others had been thrown on their sides and had rolled some half dozen yards away from the line'*.



At Thorpe station there was an immediate realisation of what had happened. The station master took control, sent cabs to collect as many of the city's doctors as could be found and organised a special train to take them to the crash site. At Thorpe local people came out to help. Bonfires were lit on either side of the line, fuelled by the wreckage and gradually the dead and injured were recovered. Some of the injured were treated there while others were taken by train to Norwich and on to the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital or sent home. The dead were laid out in the skittle alley at the Thorpe Gardens. The search continued until 4am the following morning.

Initially the death toll was put at 17 but within days it rose to 23. The eventual total was 27 – 2 died some time after the accident. Over 70 were injured – some seriously. Among the dead were John Prior and James Light, driver and fireman of the Yarmouth Mail, and Thomas Clarke and Frederick Sewell, driver and fireman on the Express. Clarke is buried in Thorpe cemetery.

By 2pm the following day the wreckage had been cleared with 15 truck loads of iron, woodwork and personal possessions being taken by rail to Thorpe station, and the line reopened. Then the recriminations began.

A Board of Trade inquiry blamed Cooper and Robson for not following the system which had worked so well for so long. Cooper took the major share of the blame as the most senior and experienced. Both were put on trial for manslaughter – Robson was acquitted but Cooper was found guilty and given eight months hard labour.

The Great Eastern Railway company paid out almost £40,000 in compensation to the victims and their families and was harshly criticised for the way it ran the railway – in particular the very long hours worked by many staff.

Ironically, the company had recognised that the single line between Norwich and Brundall needed doubling and had laid a second line beside it which was awaiting Board of Trade approval. It was duly approved a few weeks after the crash and brought into use. There is a plaque commemorating the crash in Girlings Lane, off Yarmouth Road, which is very close to the site of the accident.

Mystery of the stones

You may recall that in the spring edition we asked for comments on ornamental stonework found in a garden on St Andrew's Avenue. The Norfolk Museums Service provided an answer.

Some of it appears to have been 13th century in origin, possibly from the ruins of the church which stood at the top of the Hillside allotments.

The other pieces were probably from 'a fairly grand early Victorian house or public building' which may have been collected to make up a rockery or other garden feature.

Walter Cary – turf accountant, farmer, race horse owner, greyhound proprietor and landlord.

In late 1911 Walter Cary bought the former public house known as the Cremorne Gardens. Tucked away off Thorpe Road with access via Frogs Hall Lane the Cremorne had been a public house from 1861 until 1909 when the licensing authorities refused to renew its license. The public house itself had been built about 1840. It had also been a tea garden and, during the late 1860s was advertised as a “gymnasium ground” where customers could enjoy exercise before retiring to the bar for refreshment. The family was not able to move in to their new home immediately as the grounds and house were badly affected by the floods that did so much damage in the August of 1912. At the Cremorne the overflowing river flooded the house to a depth of two metres.



Cary (pictured on his wedding day) was a successful commission agent or bookmaker with a thriving business which he ran from his house at 7 Westlegate in Norwich where he lived with his large family; he and his wife Gertrude were to have five sons and seven daughters. In addition to his Westlegate office Cary had another one in King Street, near the junction with Prince of Wales Road, and opened others at Diss, Brandon, Bungay, East Dereham, Attleborough, Cromer, Lowestoft, North Walsham, Wymondham and Southwold during a 40 year career. He was a familiar figure at Newmarket race course and other local tracks including Great Yarmouth, Lincoln and Chelmsford.

Walter also owned racing horses which he kept at the Thorpe Road stables. He had some success with his horses: the most successful was Farm Gamp which won a number of races; Santa Lucia won the Mile Selling Handicap at Great Yarmouth in 1936 as a 20 to 1 outsider and the Visitor's Handicap at Worcester in the same year. Another of his interests was coursing which coincided with an increase of public interest in greyhound racing with several tracks opening in Norwich during the inter-war period. Aside from his sporting interests Walter Cary owned a substantial number of houses in Norwich which he rented out.

Cary laid out a track on the land to the south of the Thorpe Road (opposite Thorpe Lodge in the area now known as Cary's Meadow but formerly part of Old Hall Farm) and named it the Norwich City Stadium. The 'Grand Opening Night' on Saturday 17th June 1933 was widely advertised and the proximity of the track to the nearby tram terminus was emphasised to stress the ease of

access from Norwich. For those with cars free parking was provided. Admission prices were one shilling or sixpence. Despite it being a wet evening the local press considered that the attendance was “encouraging” and commented that “The programme was carried out without a hitch and racing was good throughout”. Race meetings were held there for several years until the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. The last meeting appears to have been held on Saturday 2nd September after which all public entertainment was suspended following the outbreak of war. Within a few days, theatres, football grounds etc outside areas from where people had been evacuated were permitted to re-open but I could find no record of the re-opening of the Thorpe Roads track. After the war the area was used as a circus venue for a couple of years about 1948-9.

During the war a barrage balloon with a Royal Air Force crew of 25 men was positioned there as part of the Norwich air defences. When the alarm was sounded the balloon was raised and the men took cover in a slit trench nearby. Some of them found it safer to join the Cary family in taking shelter in the tunnel which ran from the meadows to the grounds of Thorpe Lodge.

Some years earlier, during the 1920s, Walter had bought the 22 acre Old Hall Farm from the Mills family. The farm lay between the Cremorne and Old Thorpe Hall to the east. Here he and his son George ran a dairy herd, which they milked by hand, and kept pigs. When he was young George Cary would accompany Walter on their horse and cart to collect barley husks for cattle feed from Morgans Brewery in King Street. Later, Walter subsequently leased Brick Kiln Farm off Thunder Lane from Lord Shrewsbury which his son George also farmed.

Walter Cary died in November 1945, having been ill for some time after sustaining injuries in a fall from a cart at Brick Kiln Farm. He left a widow and ten children. He is buried at the Earlham Cemetery in Norwich. In 1948 Brick Kiln Farm was handed back to Lord Shrewsbury who subsequently sold the land for development. It is now occupied by the houses in the Thunder Lane/Spinney Road area. The Cary family continued to farm at Old Hall Farm until about 1965 when it was sold. They retained ownership of the Cremorne and the surrounding gardens until 2003 when the site was sold for development.

Other members of the Cary family were in the licensed trade. Walter’s brother George was landlord of The Thorn in Ber Street during the early years of the twentieth century and there was a family link to the pub until about 1968. Another relative kept the Woods End at Bramerton during the 1960s. Blanche Cary, one of Walter's daughters married Jack Newlands who was a speedway rider at the Firs stadium in Norwich during the 1930s and later the chauffeur to Harry Curl at Thorpe Lodge.



The Cremorne (pictured above), the Old Hall Farm and the greyhound track are now gone but the area's link with the family is continued as the open land south of the Thorpe Road is known as Cary's Meadow.

I am most grateful to Jonathan and Walter Cary for providing much of the information in this article and the illustrations.

George Newbegin's Observatory

Some time ago Brian Mitchell provided some information on George Newbegin and a photograph of his house on Yarmouth Road, complete with the two domes in the garden he used for his astronomical observations. Astronomy was Newbegin's major interest after his retirement from the tobacco factory his family had run in Norwich. Each Easter he opened his observatory to the Thorpe public which was very popular.

The house he lived in is now the Town House Hotel and restaurant and the domes are long gone. Brian has done further research and identified a mound in the garden of the River Garden where he believes the larger of the two domes stood and where a chicken coop now stands.

He is keen to find out more about Newbegin's time at Yarmouth Road and in particular what happened to his astronomical apparatus which passed on his death to the Royal Observatory at Greenwich. So if you have any information or better still any photographs please let me know so I can pass them on to Brian.

Marry, stitch, die or do worse - women's occupations in the Census of 1851 for Thorpe St Andrew

The Times in its editorial of 11 February 1857 opened 'It is a terrible incident of our social existence that the resources for gaining a livelihood left open to women are so few. ... At present, the language practically held by modern society to destitute women may be resolved into 'Marry – Stitch – Die – or Do worse!' The editorial conveniently overlooked the fact that Victorian society conspired to keep women at an economic disadvantage; they were barred from all professions and confined to ill-paid, low status work usually related to the domestic sphere. Before the passing of the 1882 Married Property Act, a woman's wealth passed to her husband on marriage and her earnings after marriage belonged to her husband. This article will focus on the women of Thorpe St Andrew and their occupations, based on information provided by the census of 1851. The 1851 census differed from previous ones in that people had to record their occupations, if any, and an examination of the 1851 census for Thorpe St Andrew confirms the *Times* editorial.

Marry, Stitch

In 19th century Britain women were expected to marry, to have children and to be looked after by their husbands. This could not happen for all women as in 1851 there were more women, 8,551,852 than men, 8,186,031. The census records 213 households in Thorpe St Andrew containing 892 people, of whom 334 were females over the age of 16 and 174 of them were recorded as wives. A high proportion of these women had nothing entered against their names in the 'rank, profession or occupation' column. This does not mean that these women did not try to earn money outside the home; women's work was often part-time, casual and not seen as important enough to record. For census analysis, wives were instructed to record themselves in some cases by reference to their husband's occupation, e.g. Mrs Susanna Steward, 'a captain's widow', and Maria Hansell a 'solicitor's wife'. Lower down the social scale were: Sarah Brinded, a 'wherry man's wife, Sarah Southgate an 'innkeeper's wife' and Frances Weeds a 'carpenter's wife'. Mary Anne Smith was the 'wife of landlord' (of the Buck Inn). A total of 294 children under the age of 16 were recorded spread between 128 households. The average is therefore 2.2 children per household but this gives too simple a picture; several families have between 6 – 8 children and many have only 1.

In an age of no employment rights, pensions, child, unemployment or sickness benefits, women did find ways to add to the family income. Some wives took in lodgers, e.g., Mary Tubby, 39, married to an agricultural labourer, has two lodgers besides her 5 children aged from 3 days to 13 years to care for. Mary Smith, 22, also married to an agricultural labourer and with 2 young children, has a railway labourer lodging with her family. A few wives assisted their husbands in their occupations, examples are; Elizabeth Brundall, 36, a mother of one son, who is recorded as a shoe binder and assistant to her husband, a master shoemaker. Mary Harvey, 50, married to a farmer, is recorded as a 'dairy woman' and Maria Harrod, 42, married to a master tailor and with 4 children, is recorded as a tailoress. Two have distinct occupations; Helen Anderson Cotman, 32, wife of the artist John Cotman, was recorded as a school mistress and Letitia Barnard, 41, wife to a gardener, was recorded as a basket maker.

Almost the only skilled work available for women involved 'stitching' and 20 women stated their occupation as either dressmaker, seamstress or tailoress, and one recorded herself as a corset maker. This number was split almost equally between married and unmarried women, but it is noticeable that with the exception of Maria Harrod the tailoress, the married women had few or no children. Dressmaking was an essential service in Victorian Britain, no community could really be without a dressmaker, and those who were trained and skilled had a job for life, albeit one which could be exploitative and ill-paid. They could work in 'houses' as young women, and continue to work well into their old age until their eyes or hands gave out, either self employed, working from home, or as an out-door pieceworker. Anna Palmer, aged 15, and Rosa Shardelow, aged 16, are the youngest dressmakers and live with their families. Sarah Boyce, 33, dressmaker, was unmarried and living alone. Dressmakers Elizabeth Hare, 38 and Julia Turner, 29, were both unmarried and still living with their parents. Juliet Plumstead, 43, a carpenter's wife, and Christiana Tinker, 39, wife of a shoemaker, combined marriage with their occupation as dressmakers but the census does not record that either have any children. Widowed dressmaker Sarah Allen, 44, has joined the household of her brother, his wife and their 6 children.

The die or do worse

The 'worse' in the quote from the Times probably refers to prostitution as the fate of some destitute women if they wanted to stay out of the workhouse. Prostitution was rife in Victorian England, the majority being casual, resorted to only when there was no alternative. Official records reveal that a high proportion of women nationally were forced to resort to the workhouse - not only the 'fallen women' characterised in some Victorian novels but also deserted wives, widows with young children and unemployed servants. The Thorpe census records 26 widows and 136 unmarried women over the age of 16; the occupations they followed were mostly limited to servant, laundress or charwoman.

Fifteen women give their occupations as laundress or washerwoman. Doing the laundry in the nineteenth century in houses without running water was arduous, back-breaking work, so women were hired to assist households with the task. Four of the laundresses were married, to poor agricultural labourers, and the remainder were either single women or widows who had to do laundry work in order to support themselves and their children or dependent relatives. Examples are: Sarah Barber, 66, a widow, who has herself and a 10 yr old grandchild to support. Sarah Harris, 37, who is described as unmarried, has 2 young children besides herself to support. Sarah Brinded, 45, unmarried, supports herself and her widowed mother Mary, 89, a pauper. Seven Thorpe women described themselves as charwomen; 2 were married to poor farm labourers and the rest were single or widowed, e.g. Elizabeth Chettleburgh, 77, a widow who also cared for a young granddaughter; Mary Ward, 42 and unmarried, with a teenage apprentice son, and Lydia Rushmer, 48, a widow with 3 children.

The passing of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act resulted in the able-bodied unemployed having to go into a workhouse in order to receive help but outdoor assistance was still available to the sick and elderly. Seven of the widows were classed as paupers, which indicates that they were in receipt of relief administered under the English Poor Laws.

Mary Brinded, 89, is the oldest woman in Thorpe and a pauper who lives with her unmarried laundress daughter. Mary is one of only 14 women in the 70-

89 age group recorded in the census. There were 79 women in the 50-69 age group so the reduction is quite sharp.

If a woman was employed, she was most likely to be an unmarried domestic servant; domestic service accounted for 40% of female occupations in provincial cities as stated in the 1851 census. Thorpe St Andrew in 1851 has 36 households employing a total of 70 women as housekeepers, house servants, cooks, lady's maids and nurse maids, only 2 of whom were recorded as married. Two households employ 7 servants each; for example Francis May Gurney, aged 25 and a banker, has a household containing his wife Margaret and her sister, 3 children aged 5 weeks to 2 years, and: Catherine Wright, 32, lady's maid; Elizabeth Bean, 30, nurse; Sarah Wright, 23, nurse; Helen Pouel, 18, lady's maid from France; Charlotte Dawson, 23, nurse maid; Hannah Gardener, 49, cook, and a footman. Robert Wright, a land agent, employed Mary Anne Rope, 43, as a governess for his 5 children. Most of the 36 households employ just one or two servants, e.g. brother and sister Susanna, 28, and Charles Balley, 40, employ as house servants Adelaide Anderson, 19 and Elizabeth White, who at 13 is the youngest servant recorded. Unusually, the household of Sarah Postle, 56, recorded as an annuitant and fundholder, contains housekeeper Mary Gage, 60, who is married to Samuel 69, a house servant. Two widows had returned to being servants presumably on the death of their husbands; a French woman from 'Dunker' whose name is undecipherable was employed by the brewer and maltster Charles Weston as a housekeeper. Martha Keeble, 50, was a housekeeper for the 'gentlewoman and mortgagee' Margaret Clayton, 75. Elizabeth Keeble is recorded as a lady's maid in this household and was presumably Martha's daughter. The oldest servant is Johanna Bishop, widow, who at 75 is working as a nurse for new mother Sarah Smith, 27.

Just 2 women had their own businesses; Elizabeth Redwell, 55 ran her own lodging house assisted by her sister Frances, 49, but no lodgers are recorded by the census, just a visitor, Ann Chamberlain, 28, whose occupation is given as servant. Ann Rose has her own shop, as the census records her as a shopkeeper, but the type of shop is not stated. She was assisted by her niece Elizabeth Herring, 16, and they have a male lodger too. Sarah Weeds, 58, gives her occupation as a baker but it is not stated if she had her own business or worked for someone else. A few of the unmarried women helped their fathers in the family business; Elizabeth Burton, 17, assisted her general shopkeeper father, and Lucy Bracey, 15, assisted her baker and shopkeeper father. Harriet and Elizabeth Dale, 30 and 27 respectively, help their father on the family farm.

There were other independent women; e.g. Rebekah Damant, 37, a schoolmistress living alone, and 7 women who were recorded as annuitants or mortgagees, e.g. Mary Anne Bacon, 45, whose annuity allowed her to employ Sarah Cooper 37 as houseservant. Elizabeth Mack, 64, gave her occupation as a 'carrier'. Carriers could be involved in transporting small goods like eggs and butter between farms and markets, or animals or even people; the scale of her operations is not made clear by the census. Elena Weeds, 58, had a totally unique occupation amongst the women of Thorpe, that of a 'pew-opener'. Churches had for several centuries rented out pews to people who wanted their own designated seats every week, and it was a practice especially popular with the 'middle middle' and 'lower middle' classes. Elena would have readied the pews for use before services, but her occupation was under threat from 19th century church reformers on the

grounds that it prevented poorer people from attending church. Contemporary sources describe pew openers as energetic types, and Dickens' David Copperfield dreamed of one of these formidable figures on the eve of his marriage 'arranging us like a drill sergeant before the altar rails'. It will be interesting to see from the 1861 census if Elena Weeds or her successor have fought off the forces of church reform in order to ensure their role survived.

Table of occupations:

Annuitant/mortgagee	7
Assisting husband eg shoebinder	1
Assisting in family business, eg shop, farm, lodging house	6
Baker	1
Basket maker	1
Carrier	1
Charwoman	7
Cook	9
Corset maker	1
Daughter living at home, no occupation	25
Dressmaker	20
Female family member def as servant	10
Governess	3
House-servants/keepers	48
Lady's maid	3
Laundress/washerwoman	15
Lodging house keeper	1
No occupation	182
Nurse/nursemaid	10
Pauper	7
Pew Opener	1
Schoolmistress	2
Unemployed servant	2
Working in the fields	3
Living away from home supported by family	3

The Thorpe History Group is grateful to Lesley Barrett for this article which shines a light on nineteenth century society where women's' rights and opportunities were severely restricted.

Future Events

Date	Title	Venue	Time
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

All are welcome to attend our talks - there is no membership fee just a payment on the door of £3 per head which helps cover our costs.

The walks and the talk on Thorpe Lodge during Heritage Open day are free but please book as numbers are limited. You can book by contacting Nick Williams(see below).

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

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

St William's Way Library

St Williams Way Library is keen to establish a friends group to support the work of the library by fund raising, promoting library services in the community and helping to create and run activities.

You can find out more by calling in at the library or emailing them at st.williams.way.lib@norfolk.gov.uk. You can also find them on Facebook by searching @stwilliamswaylibrary

If you are interested please get in contact.